



# NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

## THESIS

### SELECTION OF MILITARY ADVISORS

by

Todd J. Clark

December 2007

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**SELECTION OF MILITARY ADVISORS**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

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## **ABSTRACT**

Proper selection of advisory personnel for “transition teams” is critical to military advisory efforts in Iraq. The selection procedures currently in place have shortcomings that may be best adjusted through analyzing historical experiences and prior lessons learned. The U.S. military has decades, if not more than a century, of advisory experience, to include with Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia.

Transition teams’ main purpose is to provide advisory support to the Iraqi Security Forces in garrison, training, and combat environments. Advisors are expected to live, work, train, and fight alongside their Iraqi counterparts. Clearly some personnel are better suited than others to such austere and often ambiguous environments. Therefore, discrete selection of appropriate personnel has to be considered for successful advising.

Historic lessons learned, coupled with current experience advising Iraqi Security Forces, suggest the need to develop discrete selection criteria. Critical to selection is recruitment and screening of candidates. Personnel that are selected for advisory duty should then proceed to a preparatory phase in which advisor-specific skills are developed or enhanced prior to deployment. Assessment should continue through all phases of team formation and deployment to ensure that there is no degradation of individual suitability and / or team capability over time.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

*[W]e might be called upon to act as advisors in future counterinsurgency wars, as in the past. In such an event, it is important that we be able to draw upon sound and realistic doctrine developed from operational experience. We are creating such doctrine and expanding our knowledge of counterinsurgency.*

*At the same time, we must not forget that this effort can go for naught if we fail to learn how to communicate our knowledge to our friends who are doing the fighting, and persuade them to accept our advice. These are the tasks of the military advisor and this is why he is so indispensable in any military assistance program.<sup>1</sup>*

The above quote may seem a recent statement given present operations in the Global War on Terror. Many “transition teams,” consisting of U.S. military advisors are being deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan to assist indigenous (host nation) militaries conduct counterinsurgency campaigns against brutal adversaries. In rereading the previous quotation, it is critical to note that it was written by a conventional U.S. Army officer serving as an advisor...42 years ago while in Vietnam.

The genesis for this thesis came in October 2005 when I was assigned as the Operations Advisor to an Iraqi Special Police Commando Brigade. While operating in Baghdad and Samarra, Iraq, I seemed to constantly receive inquiries from peers regarding the expectations for transition team members. At that time, there was a huge demand for advisors, yet no formal curriculum or consistent training programs to prepare advisory teams for their job. Furthermore, the knowledge base and doctrine for counterinsurgency for advisory missions within the conventional U.S. Army and U.S. Marine Corps was at best limited.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bryce F. Denno. “Advisor and Counterpart.” in Robert D. Ramsey III, ed., Advice for Advisors: Suggestions and Observations from Lawrence to the Present, Occasional Paper 19, Combat Institute Studies Press, Fort Leavenworth, KS, p. 43.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Army FM 3-24 defines counterinsurgency (COIN) as “military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat insurgency.” (p. 1-1 & 1-4).

In responding to these inquiries, I gradually organized my thoughts into a document that I was able to simply attach to e-mails. Based on continuous input from other advisors, I continued to refine and revise the document over the course of a year. The culmination of this effort was published in *ARMOR Magazine* in September 2006, as “Forging the Sword: Conventional U.S. Army Forces Advising Host Nation (HN) Forces.”<sup>3</sup>

I felt that this document barely scratched the surface in providing essential information to develop effective advisors, as it was based solely on key observations that my teams and I made during the one-year transition team tour. The critical nature of the mission of transition teams -- to transition the responsibility for security and stability of Iraq from U.S. to Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) elements -- demanded a more comprehensive and in-depth examination of current and proposed team selection, training, education, and utilization.

Since October 2005, vigorous attention has been given to the task of developing and deploying these advisory teams. Entire organizations have been created to address these requirements, and there is a clear professional interest by current, former, and future transition team members to further improve the effectiveness and potential of these small yet critical organizations. This thesis will review the history and describe the role of military advisory teams, and will conclude with a proposed procedure for selection and assessment of potential advisory team personnel for current and future conflicts.

This thesis draws on written accounts, doctrinal publications, and interviews, as well as personal experiences. Particular attention is paid to current selection methods as well as those methods utilized by “elite” units in the U.S. military. Current practices for the preparation and training of advisory teams are examined, and cross-referenced with the stated needs of current and past advisors. Furthermore, some lessons learned from other advisory efforts are included to ensure that the best possible framework is developed. The focus of this thesis is on U.S. advisory experiences to emphasize that this is not a new undertaking for U.S. forces.

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<sup>3</sup> Todd J. Clark. “Forging the Sword: Conventional U.S. Army Forces Advising Host Nation (HN) Forces.” *ARMOR Magazine*, Fort Knox, KY, September-October 2006.

The tactical U.S. advisory effort in Iraq is conducted at the battalion, brigade, and division-levels by small units designated “Transition Teams.” The transition teams are composed primarily of U.S. officers, non-commissioned officers, and locally-hired interpreter/translators. They operate directly with the Iraqi unit, and provide advisory assistance in the areas of “intelligence, communications, fire support, logistics, and infantry tactics.”<sup>4</sup> The composition of a generic combat arms transition team is displayed in Table 1.<sup>5</sup>

<b>IRAQ TEAM</b>	
<b>Team Chief</b>	<b>MAJOR</b>
<b>Staff / Maneuver Tnr</b>	<b>CAPTAIN</b>
<b>FA Effects Trainer</b>	<b>CAPTAIN</b>
<b>Intelligence Trainer</b>	<b>CAPTAIN</b>
<b>Logistics Trainer</b>	<b>CAPTAIN</b>
<b>HSC Advisor</b>	<b>CAPTAIN</b>
<b>Intelligence NCO</b>	<b>SERGEANT FIRST CLASS</b>
<b>Log NCO Trainer</b>	<b>SERGEANT FIRST CLASS</b>
<b>Commo Chief</b>	<b>SERGEANT FIRST CLASS</b>
<b>Medic / Corpsman</b>	<b>SERGEANT FIRST CLASS</b>
<b>FA Effects NCO</b>	<b>SERGEANT FIRST CLASS</b>

Table 1. Iraq Transition Team Composition

The null hypothesis of this thesis is that there are a variety of selection, training, and implementation procedures and methods currently in place which can be enhanced to

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<sup>4</sup> JCISFA. “Transition Team Handbook (Draft).” p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Army. “First Infantry Division Transition Team Training.” PowerPoint slide briefing (titled “Optimized 20 JUL VIP BRIEF version 54”), provided to author by 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division by Brigade Executive Officer LTC Curt Hudson. Combat Arms are primarily those branches of the Army that engage in direct combat with enemy forces.

better man, prepare, and deploy advisory teams. To elucidate these, I will compare the methodology originally adopted with the opinions of current / former advisors, doctrinal publications, and historical documents. Interviews were conducted with personnel of varying ranks and military occupational specialties, as well as indigenous forces. Based on these and other research, I will investigate what might be the best course of action for selecting and assessing prospective team members, and what might be added by way of preparation and training.

The current focus for U.S. efforts in Iraq is the transition of security duties from primarily U.S.-forces to competent Iraqi security forces. However, it is critical that the Iraqi forces only be given responsibility for security duties when they are ready, regardless of Americans' political desires in Iraq.<sup>6</sup> This process requires specific competencies from both the U.S. and Iraqi sides, and is critical to the transition of security responsibility to Iraqi Security Forces. As such, the effort must “develop and build resident capability and capacity in the [Host Nation (HN)] government and security forces.”<sup>7</sup> To address the process for setting conditions for advisory success, this thesis will focus on the methods for selecting the best military personnel for advisor tasks. In doing so, specific qualities, capabilities, and traits will be examined to determine what is optimal in advisor selection and assessment. This project will identify possible incentives to attract and keep the best personnel for subsequent advisory requirements. Finally, this document will analyze the quality and suitability of advisor preparation and training.

My hope is that this project will offer the means by which the U.S. Army can further develop its advisory program from selection through deployment to Iraq. The thesis will only touch on potential organizational considerations, since this deserves a

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<sup>6</sup> Thomas E. Ricks. Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq. The Penguin Press, New York: 2006, p. 435. The author quotes retired U.S. Army Special Forces Lieutenant Colonel Kalev Sepp, a counterinsurgency expert, in detailing how the U.S. must prosecute the transition of security responsibilities to the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). Sepp states, “To push Iraqi forces to the fore before they are ready is not ‘leaving to win,’ it is rushing to failure.” The long-term security implications for the region are far too important to abandon the efforts based on “expedience.”

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Army. Field Manual 3-24: Counterinsurgency. Headquarters, Department of the Army, Washington, DC: December 15, 2006, p. 5-2.

study in its own right. Lastly, this thesis relies heavily on current published counterinsurgency doctrine since many aspects of advisory duty – to include work with indigenous forces – are based on concepts developed over the years to defeat insurgencies.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> The current doctrinal publication for counterinsurgency is U.S. Army Field Manual 3-24 / U.S. Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 3-33.5, December 2006.

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## II. TRANSITION TEAM HISTORY

*In early 1962 the United States Army was faced with a fast-breaking and new type of challenge in Southeast Asia. The task was to reorient the thinking and to modify the training of large numbers of officers and men and to deploy them to Vietnam as advisors in the military effort to stem a rampaging and forgotten type of enemy – the guerilla. . . The Military Assistance Training Advisor Course at Fort Bragg was developed to give combat arms personnel a quick resume in lessons learned from the guerrilla wars in recent years.*<sup>9</sup>

The reorientation described above by a young Vietnam-era Army officer clearly intimates that the U.S. Army *should* be experiencing a major *déjà vu* in the current struggles in Iraq. As the author notes, if resourceful young personnel were prepared ahead of time, they would be well-positioned to perform extraordinary missions successfully. As he goes on to comment, the U.S. reorientation was “a little late but, on the whole, not bad.”<sup>10</sup>

While there are certainly some parallels between Vietnam and Iraq, the key point here is that the U.S. Army has performed fairly well in past advisory efforts, yet routinely seems to have been discarded the institutional lessons and disbanded organizations that can perform these tasks (with the exception of U.S. Army Special Forces). In fact, the subject of counterinsurgency received scant attention in U.S. military service schools from 1975 to 2003.<sup>11</sup> Yet past advisors and advisory efforts provide distinct lessons that may be applied today in Iraq, and in other contentious areas in the future.

Ironically, one of the most successful advisory missions in history assisted with the establishment of a new nation that would go on to become the sole superpower by the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Major General Baron Fredrick von Steuben, a Prussian Army officer, was employed as Inspector General of the Continental Army by General George Washington during the American Revolutionary War. Von Steuben’s efforts helped transform a

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<sup>9</sup> Richard A. Jones. “The Nationbuilder: Soldier of the Sixties,” in Ramsey, p. 11.

<sup>10</sup> Jones, p. 12.

<sup>11</sup> Richard M. Cavagnol. Personal correspondence, October 2007.

ragtag army of undisciplined farmers and merchants with access to personal weapons into a professional fighting force that eventually defeated the British. The United States was thus born, thanks in part to the provision of foreign military assistance.<sup>12</sup>

Modern history has seen American advisory units deploy to war-torn areas to both restore order and assist with stability and security. In the U.S. Civil War professional U.S. soldiers trained militias. Recent U.S. advisory efforts have seen significant numbers of both conventional and unconventional (i.e., U.S. Army Special Forces, Office of Strategic Services, Central Intelligence Agency, etc.) forces providing advisory elements to France and Yugoslavia during World War II, Greece during the post-World War II communist uprising, Korea during that conflict, and several countries in Southeast Asia, most notably during the Vietnam War. Subsequent efforts by the U.S. Army Special Forces include global counterinsurgency and counternarcotics advisory missions. It is clear that the U.S. Army possesses over a century of advisory experience, albeit almost one-third of this period has involved almost exclusively special operations forces.<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately, many of the experiences and lessons learned from these endeavors have not been retained or taught in military schools.

Deploying advisory units to unstable or fledgling allies provides a relatively economical means of protecting or furthering U.S. interests in terms of personnel, equipment, political, and financial costs. In this sense, “advisors can be a cheap and effective tool.”<sup>14</sup> Consequently, advisory elements seem to be the kind of effective military, political, and economic tool to satisfy both domestic and international demands. Indeed, the “potential benefits of advisory missions [and] relatively low costs of operations [ensures] that security assistance missions will continue to be a highly useful political tool in the future.”<sup>15</sup>

Establishing an effective and efficient methodology for advisory duty must provide the basis for doctrinal procedures for such duty. In light of past advisory efforts

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<sup>12</sup> O. Kent Strader. “The Role of the American Advisor,” in Ramsey, p. 93.

<sup>13</sup> Strader, p. 93.

<sup>14</sup> David L. Shelton. “Some Advice for the Prospective Advisor,” in Ramsey, p. 65.

<sup>15</sup> Shelton, p. 69.



whose lessons and procedures were lost to time and disinterest, it is critical that advising foreign forces becomes a high priority in the military establishment. In the words of a former U.S. advisor to El Salvador:

[I] do not believe that our doctrinal approach to advisory business should be based on luck. If the job is worth doing, it is worth doing right. . . . I do not believe that we have doctrinally learned much from either our ‘loss’ in Vietnam or our ‘victory’ in El Salvador. . . . [W]e owe it to our country and those we want to help, to get our act together and figure out how to do this type of mission.<sup>16</sup>

Clearly, the pressing immediate concern is Iraq. Any government fails “unless it maintains a degree of order everywhere.”<sup>17</sup> While Iraq was arguably stable during the Saddam era, this stability rapidly deteriorated with the invasion of Coalition Forces. Iraqi security forces, both civil and military, essentially disintegrated following the U.S. invasion in 2003. Those that did not abandon their duties were officially disbanded by the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) in the Spring of 2003.<sup>18</sup> The resulting power vacuum necessitated the utilization of Coalition Forces in internal security duties against a mounting insurgency. Actually, the very loss of security and stability granted insurgent forces and sectarian militias the opportunity to exert control over the populace.<sup>19</sup>

The inability of Coalition Forces to truly penetrate the population then led to growing successes by former regime loyalists, militant radical Islamists, and general

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<sup>16</sup> Gregory T. Banner. “After Action Report, 2d MILZONE OPATT Chief,” in Ramsey, p. 74.

<sup>17</sup> U.S. Army. Field Manual 3-24: Counterinsurgency, p. 1-2.

<sup>18</sup> Ricks, pp. 161-162. The author further notes that the initial intent for Saddam-era security forces was to utilize them for reconstruction-related tasks. This prospect would prevent large numbers of unemployed military-aged males from returning to society. Past counterinsurgency efforts have revealed that a primary concern in developing insurgencies is the availability of this demographic as a manpower pool. The Office for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance further determined that this activity was so critical, that a private contractor must build a “New Iraqi Army” because the U.S. military would “move too slow.”

<sup>19</sup> U.S. Army. FM 3-24: Counterinsurgency, p. 1-7. FM 3-24 defines security as “[a] condition that results from the establishment and maintenance of protective measures that ensure a state of inviolability from hostile acts or influences”; stability is “[maintaining or establishing] a safe and secure environment, provide essential government services, emergency infrastructure reconstruction, and humanitarian relief.”

criminals conducting illegal and / or hostile activities.<sup>20</sup> A growing popular perception that the Coalition Forces were “occupiers” further galvanized public opinion, accelerated by heavy-handed “conventional” tactics favored by the Coalition Forces elements. Even Iraqi units were largely oriented toward conventional methods to deal with potential external threats (similar to early efforts with the Army of the Republic of Vietnam).<sup>21</sup> This was unfortunate since, when waging a counterinsurgency, the indigenous population must provide the impetus and apparatus to regain stability in terms of security, services, and improving economic conditions in the area.<sup>22</sup>

Early efforts to create Iraqi units met with limited success. The initial efforts to develop indigenous forces occurred during pre-invasion preparations as the Free Iraqi Fighters (FIF), composed primarily of Iraqi expatriates, participated in the 2003 invasion. However, this organization failed for a number of performance and political reasons.<sup>23</sup> Subsequently, Coalition Forces began the formation of internal security elements dubbed the Iraqi National Guard (ING), trained by a coalition of U.S. soldiers and contractors. There was very little emphasis on employing U.S. Army Special Forces for this training, despite the fact that they traditionally have the mission of developing indigenous forces.<sup>24</sup> This early effort by the Coalition Forces’ Office for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance was a planned activity to respond to the huge security vacuum developing in the immediate post-invasion period.<sup>25</sup> Unfortunately, the ING developed what was at best a bad reputation with both Coalition troops and the Iraqi population.<sup>26</sup> Problems

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<sup>20</sup> According to U.S. Army FM 3-24 (p. 1-1), “[a]chieving victory . . . depends on a group’s ability to mobilize support for its political interests . . . and to generate enough violence to achieve political consequences.”

<sup>21</sup> Ricks, p. 394.

<sup>22</sup> U.S. Army. Field Manual 3-24: Counterinsurgency, p. 1-1.

<sup>23</sup> Ricks, p. 124

<sup>24</sup> Ricks, p. 328. In fact, the Secretary of Defense remarked that using Special Forces was a waste of their talents based on their previous performance in Iraq and Afghanistan (presumably conducting “direct action” missions that deal directly with applying combat power against enemy forces).

<sup>25</sup> Ricks, pp. 161-162.

<sup>26</sup> Ricks, pp. 147 & 268. The director of ORHA later stated that “the Iraqi Army was shit,” more predisposed to complaining and deserting than conducting required operations. Later, the author specifies that during the Battle of Fallujah in 2004, an Iraqi battalion with “695 soldiers on the rolls, 106 had deserted and another 104 [refused to fight] . . . [a]ll of the Iraqi interpreters [quit as well] . . .” (p. 339).

only increased as the U.S. downsized forces in certain areas, while giving ISF elements responsibility for these areas. Existing ISF units became completely combat ineffective as U.S. forces withdrew; some units refused to conduct operations at all and were allegedly cooperating with enemy forces.<sup>27</sup> The reduction of U.S. forces and poor communication between U.S. and Iraqi forces resulted in decreasing interaction with partner elements.

The inadequate plan for the development of the ISF, coupled with unsatisfactory logistics and support efforts, resulted in virtually no ISF force being capable of executing its mission or prescribed duties.<sup>28</sup> This inattention had a “corrosive effect” on the ISF and stimulated factional frictions during the period 2004-2005. The failures of past efforts to establish a viable Iraqi security apparatus led to the need for a dedicated U.S. headquarters charged with ISF development.<sup>29</sup> This organization would both oversee the formation and development of ISF elements, but also provide connectivity with U.S. forces.<sup>30</sup> Following the transition of power from the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) to the Iraqi government in 2004, Iraqi Army (Ministry of Defense [MoD]) and Police (Ministry of the Interior [MoI]) forces became the martial implements of the Iraqi state. These units received training and advisors primarily from local U.S. military units, although a number of the Iraqi personnel had received some level of training in the Iraqi security forces during the Saddam Hussein regime.

The Iraq situation, particularly given what some label U.S. complicity in the degradation of security following the 2003 invasion, remains a divisive issue. As a defense analyst for the Center for Strategic and International studies commented, “No single mission is more important than security, and no Iraqi popular desire is clearer than that this mission be done by Iraqis . . . [t]he U.S. has been guilty of a gross military, administrative, and military failure.”<sup>31</sup> Several countries opposed the invasion from the

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<sup>27</sup> Ricks, p. 333.

<sup>28</sup> Ricks, p. 328.

<sup>29</sup> Ricks, p. 268. The organization established to oversee the development of all ISF was named the Multi-National Security Transition Command – Iraq (MNSTC-I).

<sup>30</sup> Ricks, p. 324.

<sup>31</sup> Ricks, p. 341.

outset, most notably “staunch” U.S. allies like Germany and France. But thanks to the conduct of the war even in the early stages, many countries that initially supported military action, to include the provision of combat forces, no longer overtly support continued U.S. activities. Continued U.S. military action in Iraq provides the impetus for condemnations of “American hegemony” and even imperialism. These international assertions continually threaten key U.S. governmental alliances and multilateral activities.<sup>32</sup>

America itself is deeply divided on the war in Iraq, with most opinion polls registering discontent with the current war effort.<sup>33</sup> The divide has visibly affected American politics, with well-defined rifts between the major political parties; many Americans are reminded of the defeat in Vietnam, and the public’s resolve to halt operations there.<sup>34</sup> This issue promises to play a major role in upcoming political elections as the parties seek favor through distancing themselves from current Iraq policies. Public opinion appears to favor a reduction in troop numbers in Iraq.<sup>35</sup> This has led to a strong demand for fielding military units that can boost the proficiency of the Iraqi Security Forces quickly. Fortunately, the U.S. military has done advisory support in the past; unfortunately, “it did not capture that experience in doctrine.”<sup>36</sup>

According to some sources, Iraqi soldiers are more effective than U.S. soldier when it comes to certain things. This realization is apparent to the leadership of U.S. commanders in Iraq seasoned by several tours of duty.<sup>37</sup> According to the Iraq Study

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<sup>32</sup> Francis Fukuyama. “The Clash of Cultures and American Hegemony.” A Presentation to the American Political Science Association, September 1, 2006. (URL: <http://www.the-american-interest.com/ai2/article.cfm?Id=178&MId=5>), accessed June 11, 2007.

<sup>33</sup> “Iraq” poll. Pollingreport.com (URL: <http://www.pollingreport.com/iraq.htm>), accessed June 11, 2007. This site lists multiple domestic U.S. polls from major media outlets.

<sup>34</sup> U.S. Army. FM 3-24: Counterinsurgency, p. 1-8.

<sup>35</sup> Associated Press. “Bush Wrapping Up Planning Stage for New Strategy in Iraq.” FOXNews.com Politics Section, January 7, 2007. (URL: <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,242254,00.html?sPage=fnc.politics/pentagon>), accessed June 11, 2007 This article is representative of the many available that addresses U.S. public opinion of the Iraq war policy.

<sup>36</sup> Robert D. Ramsey III. Advising Indigenous Forces: American Advisors in Korea, Vietnam, and El Salvador. Occasional Paper 18, Combat Institute Studies Press, Fort Leavenworth, KS, n.d., p. 1.

<sup>37</sup> Ricks, p. 416.

Group, although there was a need for 10-20,000 troops assigned to work with Iraqi units, only around 3-4,000 are currently assigned to transition teams.<sup>38</sup> The current environment within both international and domestic military, social, and political communities, demands a decisive solution to the current turmoil in Iraq. The primary method for expediting the withdrawal of U.S. forces is to develop the competency, confidence, and legitimacy of the Iraqi Security Forces.

In the summer of 2004, the commander in Iraq, General George W. Casey, first assigned dedicated U.S. military teams assigned to specific Iraqi units.<sup>39</sup> These “transition teams” under the overall command of then-Lieutenant General David H. Petraeus provided an embedded U.S. military element that assisted in training, equipping, and advising indigenous forces, with the rationale that “successful COIN operations require a high ratio of security forces to the protected population.”<sup>40</sup> The transition teams initially were composed of U.S. military personnel from throughout the force (or “out of hide”).<sup>41</sup> The high demand for transition teams resulted in lowered standards for personnel, and an expedited training process that did not adequately address advisor-specific skills. In fact, the “advisor effort [was] a low priority in personnel assignment”; there were no true selection criteria.<sup>42</sup> Later teams were comprised of personnel from established units, such as the Active Component / Reserve Component (AC/RC) 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, 75<sup>th</sup> Division (Training Support). In both cases, the fielded teams drew personnel from the entire U.S. military: active duty, reserve component, and multi-services. Most recently, the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division assumed responsibility for building, training, and deploying training teams composed of personnel from throughout the U.S. Army.

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<sup>38</sup> James A. Baker, III, and Lee H. Hamilton, *et al.* “The Iraq Study Group Report.” Iraq Study Group, United States Institute of Peace, Washington, DC, December, 2007. p. 49.

<sup>39</sup> Ricks, p. 392-393.

<sup>40</sup> U.S. Army. FM 3-24: Counterinsurgency, p. 1-2.

<sup>41</sup> Carter F. Ham, Major General, U.S. Army. “Transition Team’s Role in Iraq.” Military Training Technology Online Archives, originally published in Volume 12, Issue 1, April 10, 2007. (URL: <http://www.military-training-technology.com/article.cfm?DocID=1972>), accessed June 11, 2007.

<sup>42</sup> Ricks, p. 394.

Meanwhile, personnel continue to be involuntarily assigned as advisors based on their absence from current operational deployments, long-term posting at a duty assignment, or other “selection” criteria determined by the U.S. Army Human Resources Command (HRC). The tendency to assign “generalist” personnel to the advisory mission, rather than “specialists,” mirrors similar practices during the Vietnam War era.<sup>43</sup> In essence, the teams are not being fielded with the optimum personnel for the mission, which to a large extent repeats mistakes made with advisory personnel in Vietnam:

[As replacements debarked a plane, the personnel clerk needed to fill the position of a] headquarters commandant for a division advisory detachment. “That armor captain . . . he’ll fit the bill. Too bad he didn’t get here last week when we had a requirement for just the job he’s been holding for three years.”<sup>44</sup>

The recent focus on building competent and reliable Iraqi Security Forces has placed increased emphasis on fielding effective transition teams. In addition to dedicating a combat brigade (1<sup>st</sup> Brigade of the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division) to the training of transition team personnel, Human Resources Command (HRC) is exploring various incentives for advisor volunteers, such as bonus pay, assignment preference, and transition team assignments fulfilling professional duty requirements like required “key and developmental positions.”<sup>45</sup> However, simply assigning the mission of putting together and preparing teams to a traditional U.S. Army combat brigade and advertising significant benefits for volunteers (the majority of whom are then selected) does not necessarily produce the best possible advisors to help ensure expedient, effective U.S. rebuilding of Iraqi indigenous forces.

The preparation and training activities currently conducted at Fort Riley, KS, are based on command guidance and recent lessons learned. The training is not exclusively

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<sup>43</sup> Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr. The Army and Vietnam. The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, MD, 1988, pp. 208-209.

<sup>44</sup> Jones, p. 14.

<sup>45</sup> Rick Maze. “DoD May Offer Incentives for Transition Team Duty in Iraq.” *Army Times*, ATPCO, Springfield, VA, December 6, 2006. Note that the assignment preference is the only currently approved perk and is announced in MILPER 07-034; MILPER messages may be viewed at the U.S. Army Human Resources Command website <https://perscomnd04.army.mil/milpermsgs.nsf>, although the site requires an Army Knowledge Online user name and password).

dedicated to advisor skills, and provides general combat readiness and team building activities. Current training suggests that, similar to “relearning” COIN, the U.S. Army is also relearning the principles of selecting and preparing personnel to conduct advisory missions.<sup>46</sup> However, the employment of fielded transition teams still does not follow any clear doctrinal model. Previously, many teams simply conducted a mission analysis based on varying commanders’ intent in order to achieve their advisory tasks. The tasks range from providing direct combat roles alongside indigenous Iraqi forces, to conducting on-site training assistance, to simply maintaining contact through wireless communications and periodic visits to Iraqi units. But, to optimally employ teams, existing or anticipated capabilities need to be taken into consideration in conjunction with operational requirements. These must be identified and addressed in order to achieve (or enhance) mission accomplishment.

While it is obvious that there is a need to build a capacity to select and train advisors, we must recognize apparent tendencies within the U.S. Army culture. First, the modern U.S. Army was largely formed and influenced by the Second World War (regardless of the numerous successes that Allied forces enjoyed while mobilizing indigenous forces, such as Detachment 101 in Burma).<sup>47</sup> Large conventional forces formed the bulk of the military, and completed the defeat of the Axis powers through set-piece maneuver and firepower. Based on this success, the military continued to utilize large mechanized conventional formations and strategies in preparing for the “next war.” Strict adherence to doctrine, with little deviation, was required to fight the planned initial retrograde in the face of numerically superior conventional Soviet forces on the German plains. In essence, the focus was on defeating a familiar foe, following the model developed centuries before in Westphalia.

One major departure during the Cold War period was the advancement of U.S. Army Special Forces by President John F. Kennedy in 1961, based on his interest in

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<sup>46</sup> U.S. Army. FM 3-24: Counterinsurgency, Introduction, p. ix.

<sup>47</sup> OSS-101 Association, Inc, website. “Detachment 101, Office of Strategic Services, Burma – April 14, 1942 to July 12, 1945, ‘The American Kachin Rangers’.” World War II OSS Detachment 101, OSS-101 Association, Inc (URL: <http://www.oss-101.com/>), accessed October 18, 2007.

unconventional warfare.<sup>48</sup> The Special Forces, developed to influence conflicts “by, with, and through” indigenous troops (among other tasks), allowed U.S. military intervention by highly influential small units. Unfortunately, battlefield successes did not lead to acceptance, as the conventional Army leaders often considered Special Forces soldiers to be renegades. To this day, there remains significant hesitation by conventional leaders to truly accept unconventional units.

The hesitation to embrace different warfighting concepts also serves to hinder the advancement of personnel who do the unconventional while serving in conventional units. For example, an Armor officer who has been an advisor to an indigenous force may not be looked upon as favorably by conventional leaders or promotion boards as an Armor officer who held a command or “key developmental” position in a conventional unit.

Lastly, the military cultural perception that large conventional forces are the “most acceptable” solution for any given conflict prevents adequate resourcing of new organizations for three reasons. First, any effort deemed “less important” will not get the attention or funds that can allow it to fully develop. Second, positions that are deemed “less important” will not attract enough ambitious and qualified personnel, especially when the potential for professional recognition is less likely. Third, those who presume counterinsurgency operations are merely “small wars” will be prone to assume they can be handled by conventional forces and resources at hand.<sup>49</sup>

Nevertheless, the U.S. Department of Defense has acknowledged the criticality of being able to provide advisory personnel. Specifically, the *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* stipulates that the U.S. military possess the ability to “train, equip, and advise indigenous forces; deploy and engage with partner nations; conduct irregular warfare;

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<sup>48</sup> SpecialOperations.com website. “Special Forces: The Early Years.” U.S. Army Special Forces, The Green Berets, Special Forces History and Origins, 2000. (URL: [http://www.specialoperations.com/Army/Special\\_Forces/SF\\_Info/Detailed\\_History.htm](http://www.specialoperations.com/Army/Special_Forces/SF_Info/Detailed_History.htm)), accessed June 12, 2007.

<sup>49</sup> Cavagnol.



and support security, stability, transition, and reconstruction operations.”<sup>50</sup> The clear focus on this “indirect technique” for defeating enemies of the U.S. requires a significant shift in the U.S. military’s structure and doctrine.

Currently, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade of the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division (1-1 ID) is responsible for this training. Its mission statement is “On order, the 1st Brigade Combat Team deploys and conducts Full Spectrum Operations in support of worldwide contingencies.”<sup>51</sup> This suggests that the focus is not solely on preparing training teams to deploy to the major theaters.

1-1 ID units are currently configured to train personnel in primarily combat-oriented subject areas, along with Iraq-specific subjects (language, history, culture, etc).<sup>52</sup> The general model may be appropriate. However, there is minimal specialization in these tasks. In reality, there are personnel reporting for training who have not been in a tactical unit in a long time. Therefore, significant time has to be spent training standard military skills as opposed to specialized advisor-specific skills.<sup>53</sup> This is just one indicator that an organization tasked with selection (and deselection) of advisor candidates should be established. As previously mentioned, there is no single group currently tasked with assessment and selection.

Instead, 1-1 ID is a reconfigured heavy brigade combat team (see Figure 1). The typical hierarchical structure, with generally standard staff sections, adheres to standard military practice and provides leaders and observer-controller / trainers to facilitate training. There is specialization in tasks for most elements, but limited availability of subject matter experts.

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<sup>50</sup> Department of Defense. “Quadrennial Defense Review Report.” Washington, DC, February 6, 2006, p. 42.

<sup>51</sup> 1-1 ID. “Mission Statement.” Taken from the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division & Fort Riley, KS, website. (URL: <http://www.riley.army.mil/view/article.asp?id=995-2002-05-07-34759-22>), accessed June 11, 2007.

<sup>52</sup> Joint Center for International Security Force Assistance (JCISFA). “Transition Team Handbook (Draft),” Fort Leavenworth, KS, April 30, 2007 p. 1. The U.S. Marine Corps conducts a separate training program for their advisory personnel. While there is collaboration with doctrinal concepts in the sphere of advisory operations, future consideration to a consolidated joint advisory training program should be considered.

<sup>53</sup> John A. Nagl, Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Army. Telephonic interview, April 2007.

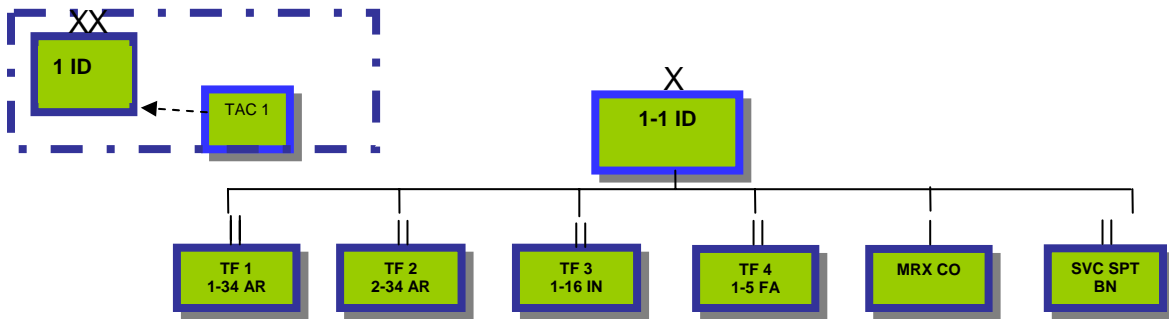


Figure 1. 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division organizational chart.<sup>54</sup>

The organization relies on a standard military structure to create a learning institution. Unfortunately, what it delivers and what is actually needed may be two different things. But even more important is that it first be able to attract capable, ambitious soldiers which, in turn, begs the question: ‘Will serving as an adviser be seen as equal to serving as a combat officer in the eyes of the promotion boards? The jury is still out.’<sup>55</sup> At a minimum, advisory duty must be viewed with neutrality by promotion boards, though the preferred state would be for advisory duty to be considered an asset. To ensure that these areas are addressed, a new organization should be established, as will be proposed later in this document. But also, advising as a mission must be embraced and supported by senior stakeholders who, in this case, primarily include senior Army leaders. Ideally, they must consider this a vehicle to further advancement within the Army. Likewise, well-regarded senior leaders should facilitate the recruiting of personnel for such a key activity regardless of their personal interest in maintaining the “best and the brightest” in their own units.

<sup>54</sup> U.S. Army. “1 ID Foreign Security Forces (FSF) Transition Team Training Mission EMTOE Reorganization Approval Brief.”

<sup>55</sup> Fred Kaplan. “Challenging the Generals.” *The New York Times*, Online Magazine, August 27, 2006, p.5 (<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/26/magazine/26military-t.html?pagewanted=5&ei=5070&en=fb30cca6f67448c0&ex=1188878400&emc=eta1>), accessed August 27, 2007.

There is currently some thought being given to establishing a permanent Advisor Corps.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, “the future appears to predict an increased role for the advisor as divisions conduct stability and reconstruction operations.”<sup>57</sup> Whether this comes about or not, advisors need to be properly resourced, which includes having institutional access to lessons learned and key requirements for the advisory mission.

It is a historical truism that there is a constant struggle between providing the best personnel to the “regular” forces or to more specialized missions. Unfortunately, in a military organization largely composed of leaders who have prepared for large conventional conflicts, quality manning tends to largely go to the traditional conventional formations. As T.R. Frehenbach has put it, “[t]raditionally, a nation instructing another should send its best men abroad; traditionally, from Athens to the America of 1950, nations do not.”<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> John A. Nagl, Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Army. “Institutionalizing Adaptation: It’s Time for a Permanent Army Advisor Corps.” Center for a New American Security, Washington, DC, June 2007.

<sup>57</sup> Strader, p. 94.

<sup>58</sup> Ramsey, p. 12.

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### III. TRANSITION TEAM MISSION AND ROLES

*An advisor is an implanter of information and ideas. All other considerations must be subordinated to this purpose. An advisor is a mature, dedicated individual who exercises patience and perseverance in accomplishing his mission. An advisor is an individual who does not attempt to Americanize everyone he meets; rather he helps people make of themselves what they want, not what the advisor wants.*<sup>59</sup>

T.E. Lawrence thoroughly documented the complexities involved in helping advise and form an Arab army during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In fact, he addressed the task as “an art, not a science, with exceptions and no obvious rules,” and his “Twenty-Seven Articles” continues to be an excellent guide for U.S. advisors in Iraq.<sup>60</sup> Ironically, while the outcome of his efforts are well-documented, the fate of those he helped is once again being shaped by a new generation of advisors.

The mission of the transition team is to “provide advisory support and direct access to coalition effects to enhance the ability of Iraqi forces to operate independently. The teams will have knowledge to assist the appropriate level staffs in tactics, military decision-making process, counter-insurgency warfare, leadership, team work, communications, and urban combat. In addition, the [transition team] will bring a background of combat arms management and organizational experience.”<sup>61</sup> To achieve this, “[a]ll land forces assigned to this high-priority mission [of advising] need thorough training, both before deploying and in theater.”<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Irving C. Hudlin. “Advising the Advisor.” in Robert D. Ramsey III, ed., Advice for Advisors: Suggestions and Observations from Lawrence to the Present, Occasional Paper 19, Combat Institute Studies Press, Fort Leavenworth, KS, p. 45.

<sup>60</sup> T.E. Lawrence. “Twenty-Seven Articles,” in Ramsey, p. 3. The original version of this document was printed in *The Arab Bulletin*, August 20, 1917, and is available at <http://www.lib.byu.edu/~rdh/wwi/1912/27arts.html>.

<sup>61</sup> Iraqi Assistance Group. “OIF Transition Team Mission.” Taken from the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division & Fort Riley, KS, website. (URL: <http://www.riley.army.mil/view/article.asp?id=583-2007-02-21-33387-72>), accessed June 11, 2007.

<sup>62</sup> U.S. Army. FM 3-24: Counterinsurgency, p. 6-3.

Another reference stipulates that the general mission of transition teams includes each of the following:<sup>63</sup>

- Train, advise, and mentor host nation (HN) security forces in the planning, coordination and execution of security operations.
- Advise and assist host nation security forces in training, employing, and sustaining security forces in combat, counter-insurgency operations, and other security operations in order to enhance their capacity to conduct independent operations.
- Demonstrate the highest standards of leadership and to develop leadership traits and principles of host nation forces.

All transition teams are expected to follow the Security Force Assistance Imperatives: understand the operational environment, employ effective leadership, ensure legitimacy, ensure unity of effort/purpose, manage information, and ensure sustainability.<sup>64</sup> The assets that the advisor provides are said to include both the knowledge and proficiency in tactics, techniques, and procedures, and also the talent to share this knowledge in an appropriate manner with host nation forces while being embedded with counterpart Iraqis.<sup>65</sup> “The measure of an advisor’s success or failure is the performance by his counterpart.”<sup>66</sup>

Other admonitions are:

“[The] transition team job is to coach, teach, and mentor.” (GEN Petraeus, Commander’s Guidance letter to Transition Team members, 8 May 2007).

“It is critical to understand and work within the Iraqi culture.” (GEN Petraeus, Commander’s Guidance).

“[Transition Teams] will live, work, and operate with [Iraqi] units.” (LTG Odierno, Commander’s Welcome letter to Transition Team members).

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<sup>63</sup> JCISFA. “Transition Team Handbook (Draft),” p. 1.

<sup>64</sup> JCISFA, “Advisor Basics.”

<sup>65</sup> JCISFA. “Transition Team Handbook (Draft),” p. 1.

<sup>66</sup> Denno, p. 33.

What these statements imply is that transition team preparation must consist of: military training and civilian subject matter. In particular, transition team “preparation . . . requires more than mastering Service doctrine; they must also be trained and educated.”<sup>67</sup>

As described, the teams are expected to bring military tactical and operational experience and leadership principles to the developing Iraqi units. The teams routinely perform these duties in extremely difficult, remote, and often dangerous environments. In most cases, teams participate in combat operations alongside their Iraqi counterpart units.

Because of the conditions under which transition teams operate, their mission must be clearly defined by the responsible chain of command and internalized by the team members. Attention must be given to the scope, goals, objectives, procedures, actions, and limitations of transition teams. Ambiguity and lack of clear understanding of the mission all too easily lead to non-unity of effort. For instance, in one 2005 case the team NCOIC believed that the team should conduct strictly training support, the operations officer believed that the team must include actual combat advising, and others were convinced that the team should only focus on resourcing the supported Iraqi force. In reality, the mission included integrating all of these actions, with the addition of other key tasks such as providing access to Coalition Forces effects (e.g., battlefield operating systems, such as air support, indirect fire support, intelligence, etc), conducting liaison with adjacent units (Coalition Forces, Iraqi Army, Iraqi Police, other U.S. governmental agencies, and non-governmental agencies), and even participating in social activities (e.g., feasts, religious celebrations like Eid al-Fitr, etc).

It is essential that the roles and responsibilities of the transition team be thoroughly understood by all parties involved. Indeed, it is as critical for adjacent conventional U.S. units to understand the purpose of the transition team as it is for individual team members to understand their role. Likewise, indigenous forces should be aware of the capabilities and limitations of their assigned team to maximize the

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<sup>67</sup> U.S. Army. FM 3-24: Counterinsurgency, p. 1-28.

partnership. The integration of *all* major players creates an environment where they can act with minimal friction and enhanced effectiveness.

Essentially, team members are combat advisors who are “organized, equipped, educated, and trained to develop host nation security forces abroad.”<sup>68</sup> This demands certain individual knowledge, skills, and abilities, along with advanced COIN- and advisor-specific training to develop competent and confident teams.

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<sup>68</sup> John A. Nagl. “Institutionalizing Adaptation: It’s Time for a Permanent Army Advisor Corps.”



## IV. TRANSITION TEAM SKILLSET DISTILLATION

*We need mature people as advisors, people who are soldier-diplomats. We do not need advisors who sacrifice their mission because of concern for efficiency reports and their chances on the next promotion list. . . . To be successful we must go beyond the impersonal approach and tear down the fences in which we surround ourselves. We must sink our feet deep into the soil of the host country so that our planting will bring a bountiful harvest of peace.*<sup>69</sup>

T.E. Lawrence is an example of an excellent advisor candidate. Although he was not a career military man, he nonetheless was able to perform extraordinary acts with his indigenous counterparts. Lawrence possessed the following key attributes:<sup>70</sup>

He had years of training in the region [and his] unique situational understanding came from his academic background, his linguistic skills, his deep cultural understanding, his years in the region, his personal relationship with his counterpart, his understanding of what was and was not possible, his constant awareness of what was going on around him, and his unique genius.

Personnel selected to conduct advisory missions require proficiency in more capabilities than those provided soldiers for conventional combat operations.<sup>71</sup> Meanwhile, “[l]earning done before deployment results in fewer lives lost and less national treasure spent relearning past lessons in combat.”<sup>72</sup> While standard combat requires the soldier or unit to “shoot, move, and communicate,” advisory duties require additional attention to non-military aspects of unit and staff development; “[s]ome types of personalities are just unacceptable for this type of work.”<sup>73</sup> Even basic intellectual attributes, such as clear writing and speaking skills, must be addressed based on the need to provide information to many different target audiences.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Hudlin, p. 47.

<sup>70</sup> Ramsey, p. 1.

<sup>71</sup> Strader, p. 100.

<sup>72</sup> U.S. Army. FM 3-24: Counterinsurgency, Introduction, p. ix.

<sup>73</sup> Banner, p. 82.

<sup>74</sup> Strader, p. 102.

Military skills proficiency, such as marksmanship and physical fitness are undeniably core military skills. Indeed, they are regulated requirements for every Soldier. The main reason for selecting individuals who already possess these skills would be to spend more time on developing advanced rather than basic military skills. Centers responsible for preparing transition teams should not be bringing individuals up to the “standard.” Instead, specialized training needs to start sooner. Also, the training regimen must create an environment in which teams can work not only to develop and strengthen individual team members, but those of the team as a whole.<sup>75</sup>

The high demand for advisory personnel necessitates that advisor training must focus on the development (or enhancement and refinement) of the military skills necessary for small units operating with indigenous forces in austere environments. The training must lead to a team that has the combat power to survive on the battlefield, yet one that leaves a small footprint.<sup>76</sup> Such training is essential to success and must be given a high priority. Unfortunately, many of the non-military subject areas are not easily assimilated by all soldiers and officers.<sup>77</sup> Further, the end state for this preparation must be teams that can employ their tactical, technical, and educational skills, by sharing and developing this knowledge *with* their assigned ISF unit.<sup>78</sup>

In developing such capabilities, the *Quadrennial Defense Review* specifies that the U.S. military must “understand foreign cultures and societies and possess the ability to train, mentor and advise foreign security forces and conduct counterinsurgency campaigns.” Further, advisors must possess and demonstrate the following attributes:

- Language and cultural awareness to facilitate the expansion of partner capacity.
- The ability to communicate U.S. actions effectively to multiple audiences, while rapidly countering enemy agitation and propaganda.

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<sup>75</sup> U.S. Army. *FM 3-24: Counterinsurgency*, p. 6-14.

<sup>76</sup> Denno, p. 39.

<sup>77</sup> U.S. Army. *FM 3-24: Counterinsurgency*, Introduction, p. x.

<sup>78</sup> JCISFA. “Transition Team Handbook (Draft).” p.1

- Joint [and coalition] coordination, procedures, systems and, when necessary, command and control to plan and conduct complex interagency operations.
- [P]roficient in irregular operations, including counterinsurgency and stabilization operations.<sup>79</sup>

What is key is to leverage our partners, who “have greater local knowledge and legitimacy with their own people and can thereby more effectively fight terrorist networks.”<sup>80</sup>

Notice that the principal focus of transition teams is to survive *socially in* the indigenous environment. The small size and unique mission of advisory teams requires that teams provide more than combat power. They must also co-habitate and conduct operations with the indigenous force, show their willingness to share in hardships, and demonstrate constant situational awareness of current requirements and trends.<sup>81</sup> As such, the teams must be proficient in the skills of warrior-diplomats.<sup>82</sup> The advisor must be “an advisor and a nationbuilder as well as a soldier.”<sup>83</sup> President John F. Kennedy stated that:

You [military professionals] must know something about strategy and tactics and logistics, but also economics and policy and diplomacy and history. You must know everything you can know about military power, and you must also understand the limits of military power. You must understand that few of the important problems of our time have, in the final analysis, been finally solved by military power alone.<sup>84</sup>

Simply, the team members must be compatible with the indigenous forces with which they will work. Because advisors must understand key aspects of their counterparts’ culture in order to “achieve a degree of influence” – which is undeniably a

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<sup>79</sup> Department of Defense, p. 23-24, 42.

<sup>80</sup> Department of Defense, p. 23.

<sup>81</sup> Ricks, p. 340.

<sup>82</sup> U.S. Army. FM 3-24: Counterinsurgency, p. 2-8.

<sup>83</sup> Jones, p. 13.

<sup>84</sup> Center for Stabilization and Reconstruction Studies website (<http://www.nps.edu/CSRS/>), Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, accessed September 4, 2007.

key component of the advisory mission -- team members must study and develop adequate knowledge of the culture, language, and history of their advised force.<sup>85</sup> As was discovered by advisors in Vietnam:

No specific set of rules can be written for bridging the cultural gap and overcoming the barriers to cooperation that arise in the highly diverse relationships between U.S. advisors and their Vietnamese counterparts. The effectiveness of the advisory group could be substantially increased, however, through three basic endeavors: improving the selection of U.S. advisors; devising training programs that will make advisors sensitive to a variety of possible situations; and providing an administrative setting that will allow individual advisors to use their skills to best advantage.<sup>86</sup>

As representatives of the U.S., and as critical elements of U.S. policy, transition teams must expect to be both targets of enemy forces and objects of curiosity for counterparts and the local population. In order to respond to this, advisors must be well-versed and comfortable discussing important local, national, regional, and international topics. Advisors must also be comfortable with participating in such discussions in public settings with many onlookers, some of whom will invade their personal space. Individuals who dislike such interactions are not suited to be advisors. Conversely, gregarious individuals should do fine.<sup>87</sup> While being the “center of attention” should not be a primary motivation for an advisor, he must be prepared to be thrust into that position by a curious and active population.<sup>88</sup>

The ability to establish rapport is an undeniable necessity for a military advisor.<sup>89</sup> While rapport takes time to establish, there is a certain truth to first impressions being

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<sup>85</sup> Jones, p. 12, & U.S. Army. FM 3-24: Counterinsurgency, p. A-1.

<sup>86</sup> Hickey, p. 146.

<sup>87</sup> Strader, p. 101.

<sup>88</sup> Shelton, p. 68.

<sup>89</sup> rapport. (n.d.). *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition*. Retrieved October 22, 2007, from Dictionary.com website: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/rapport>. “Rapport” is defined as a “[r]elationship, especially one of mutual trust or emotional affinity.

lasting impressions. Comportment, knowledge, skill, background, and performance all assist in developing rapport. The following description from the Vietnam-era holds true for any advisory mission:

The greater the advisor's professional competence and his ability to establish rapport with the man he is advising, the more likely is it that the counterpart will accept and act on his advice. One quality without the other will greatly diminish the effectiveness of the American. Professional expertise is a requirement both obvious and easily measurable, and it has been the crucial problem in the advisor-counterpart relationship. A faculty for effective interaction with a foreign national, and the skills necessary to developing and expressing that faculty, are much more intangible.<sup>90</sup>

The potential for frequent and close interaction with the indigenous population demands comportment standards. As previously stated, the transition team is an extremely visible representative of the United States government. Therefore, each member must display impeccable comportment in dealing with local civilians and with host nation military personnel (not to mention chance encounters with members of various media and Non-Governmental Organizations). The requirement for advisors is to conduct themselves "above reproach." Regardless of their personal views, which may contrast with local "views and customs about what is financially, morally, or legally acceptable," advisors must not make waves.<sup>91</sup> It is critical that an individual be capable of "observ[ing] both himself and others [while] in a foreign culture, and should be ready to introduce self-corrective measures when necessary."<sup>92</sup>

In order to fully appreciate why this is important, and what – in particular – is locally sensitive, it is important that a person "be a learner before he can be an advisor and hence cultivate a habit of inquiry and interest with respect to another society."<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Hickey, p. 120. For clarification: comportment. (n.d.). *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition*. Retrieved October 22, 2007, from Dictionary.com website: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/comportment>. "Comportment is defined as "[b]earing; deportment."

<sup>91</sup> Shelton, p. 69.

<sup>92</sup> Hickey, p. 176.

<sup>93</sup> Hickey, p. 176.

There is clearly a large void when it comes to cross-cultural exposure in military schooling, although there is certainly the benefit of exposure to foreign personnel. This is useful for helping individuals determine whether they would want to work with foreign forces. Personnel with little interest in foreign counterparts are unlikely to embrace a foreign culture, develop understanding and respect for counterpart problems and solutions, learn a foreign language, or bond with member of an indigenous force.<sup>94</sup> Self-driven study of foreign cultures, traditional local governmental apparatus, and principles of COIN, are also indications of an individual's potential for advisory duty; if he is interested in a subject, he is more likely to fully embrace it.

When evaluating the performance and abilities of indigenous personnel and units, it is critical that Americans be able to appreciate local capabilities and limitations. U.S. advisors who judge indigenous forces based on American values, attitudes, and behavior patterns, may shortchange their counterparts. Local behavior, as well as military practices, may appear lazy, incompetent, dishonest, or wasteful from an American point of view. In actuality such behavior may simply be a consequence of local practice -- this is why it is essential that advisors have a good understanding of the host nation culture.<sup>95</sup>

At the same time, the common understanding of basic universal values builds the framework to establish relationships.<sup>96</sup> Universal values such as courage are immediately recognizable and respected by warriors in any civilization, and are easily discernible on the battlefield. Likewise, disloyalty is universally unacceptable in a potential comrade. Unfortunately, even these lines can blur in counterinsurgencies given shifting loyalties, individuals looking out for themselves and / or their family's well-being, or significant emotional events that might change an individual's outlook. It is critical that advisors not indulge in "mistaken assumptions that the [indigenous forces] want the same things as Americans [because it may lead to] useless projects [and cause] frustration as well as friction with counterparts and local leaders."<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Jones, p. 13.

<sup>95</sup> Hickey, p. 123.

<sup>96</sup> Denno, p. 36.

<sup>97</sup> Hickey, p. 140.

Advisors are expected by the United States government, their respective chain(s) of command, and host nation force to provide crucial information relating to host nation capabilities and limitations. Furthermore, advisors must provide honest and selfless counsel to their host nation counterparts.<sup>98</sup> They are also,

one of the most important channels for the communications of political information between the United States and the host country, and they are in touch with segments of the indigenous population that are not reached by any other U.S. personnel.<sup>99</sup>

Therefore, advisors need to exhibit impeccable integrity in their dealings with others (whether U.S. forces, ISF, or members of their own team).<sup>100</sup> This extends to promises made. Advisors must have the perseverance to carry through with all specified, implied, or otherwise promised tasks.<sup>101</sup>

None of this is possible if an individual has difficulty communicating with others. The ability to get a point across in a manner that is both understandable and amenable to the target audience is critical. Individuals who have a poor “bedside manner” are not suitable for a transition team, since “success depends on the degree to which the advisor can establish credibility with his counterpart[s].”<sup>102</sup>

For the advisor to avoid this, he must be capable of changing the way he views his environment, particularly by *trying* not to see things through American eyes. As an outgoing American general wrote when he departed Vietnam:

Of course, the advisor must try to see the situation as it looks through Vietnamese eyes; this is part of the insight he strives for – not simply understanding the way Vietnamese in general look at matters, but also how *his* Vietnamese, his counterpart, does. What are the biases, constraints, pressures, and so on, that make up his real world? In all of this, the American has to understand that he is not Vietnamese. He is only temporarily in the country, and he will be exceptional indeed if in his tour

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<sup>98</sup> Strader, p. 97.

<sup>99</sup> Hickey, p. 178.

<sup>100</sup> Hudlin, p. 46.

<sup>101</sup> Hudlin, p. 50.

<sup>102</sup> Shelton, p. 66.

he understands a small fraction of how Vietnamese look at their situation and themselves. But everything he suggests should be tested against the question 'how does this fit into the Vietnamese way?' Furthermore, it is very important to understand 'the way things move' and to take advantage of natural movement.<sup>103</sup>

After establishing rapport with his counterpart, the next challenge is to use that rapport to impel action. An individual who can communicate well, but is unable to impel his counterpart to take necessary action is hardly effective in an advisory situation.<sup>104</sup> Communicating requires some understanding of the local language (to include both verbal and non-verbal cues), as well as good negotiating skills and an ability to read his counterpart.<sup>105</sup>

An advisor must "influence the behavior of others over whom he has no authority, causing them to do things that may be foreign to their nature and habit, at the same time attempting to interpret, implement, and respond to criticisms of U.S. political decisions over which he has no input or control."<sup>106</sup> Therefore, there must be some indication that the potential advisor is adept at interpersonal relationships, and can be influential, credible, and motivational. Traits such as arrogance and anger will be far less well-received than a calm and soft-spoken demeanor, along with an affable and pleasant attitude.<sup>107</sup>

An advisor may well be compared to a salesman who has "a worthwhile product that will help [the consumer] immeasurably if the consumer just learns a bit more about it."<sup>108</sup> In order to accomplish this task, the "salesman" must learn about his customer, learn about the area, and thoroughly understand the product in order to develop a positive reputation. This demands an inquisitive and focused nature. For instance, it appears that "Arabs respect negotiation, haggling is expected . . . because negotiation is inseparable

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<sup>103</sup> Ramsey, p. 66.

<sup>104</sup> Denno, p. 39.

<sup>105</sup> Hickey, p. 141. The author emphatically states that "linguistic and social skills do not make up for a lack of professional and technical know-how" on page 172.

<sup>106</sup> Shelton, p. 65.

<sup>107</sup> Strader, pp. 99-100.



from advising,” necessitating a bit of negotiation skill to “sell” your “product.”<sup>109</sup> A true understanding of the “customer” is accomplished when the advisor can use his knowledge and panache to accomplish his advisory mission while always ensuring that his counterpart is the primary overt executor of decisions.

In building the team, and subsequently accomplishing the requirements of advising host-nation forces, every effort must be made to co-locate the team with the advised unit. This serves several purposes, foremost among them being proximity. If transition teams are geographically separated from their "client" units, they miss the necessary frequent interaction and availability for both units; “[i]t is impossible and unrealistic to expect someone to commute and have a meaningful relationship with a unit.”<sup>110</sup> Colloquially referred to as “drive-by advising,” this minimizes time spent with the client unit on a daily basis. It also heightens the likelihood of encountering hazards just given extended periods of movement since long-distance commutes to the supported indigenous increases the probability of enemy attack on the small transition team element while traveling. It also may create an impression of lack of trust between the team and client unit. As a former advisor commented, there was a common joke among the El Salvadoran military that “[t]he Spanish word ‘Asesor’ which means ‘Advisor,’ really means ‘one who tries to tell us how to run a war without ever having been there’.”<sup>111</sup>

Indeed, one of the earliest U.S. advisors to the ISF solidified the bond between his team and the ISF unit by co-habiting and fighting alongside them. He was subsequently awarded one of the few Distinguished Service Crosses bestowed in the Global War on Terror, as well as an eminent Iraqi decoration.<sup>112</sup> Sharing hardships can lead to strong mutual loyalties among advisors and their counterparts. This loyalty can at times lead to “going native” problems. It is thus critical that potential advisors are

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<sup>108</sup> Shelton, p.66.

<sup>109</sup> Strader, p. 99.

<sup>110</sup> Banner, p. 81.

<sup>111</sup> Banner, p. 77.

<sup>112</sup> Ricks, p. 404.

reliable and faithful to their nation and team first, and counterparts second; it is critical that individuals be capable of understanding where very ambiguous loyalty lines are drawn.<sup>113</sup>

When the advisor teams live, eat, and sleep with their host-nation partners, a stronger more familiar relationship develops. The amount of time spent with counterparts has a “direct and important bearing on their relationship and in many cases determines the advisor’s success in winning [respect and cooperation].”<sup>114</sup> As Vietnam experiences indicate, advisors who “share[d] food and bivouac and even the dangers of battle . . . show[ed] the highest incidence of good rapport and successful collaboration.”<sup>115</sup> Co-location also allows more frequent organized and hip-pocket training opportunities, and prevents “training to time” rather than to standard. By increasing joint training opportunities, co-location is more likely to yield an accurate assessment of capability.

Co-location places the advisory team in position to immediately deploy with the unit on hasty missions. This is critical because host nation units cannot always wait to execute short-notice missions until the arrival of their advisors. Considering all of the benefits to co-locating with the supported ISF unit, teams must be trained in site selection. Situating the team with the ISF unit in the appropriate location on the indigenous facility requires teams learn the criteria by which to select their base of operations.

The nature of advisory duties will surely generate significant levels of frustration for transition team personnel.<sup>116</sup> Advisors must be capable of multi-tasking with occasionally uncooperative or disinterested counterparts. Historically, U.S. advisors have often served as acquisition or supply personnel in the eyes of the host nation personnel. Such attitudes can create significant levels of annoyance.<sup>117</sup> Advisors likewise need to

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<sup>113</sup> Denno, p. 41.

<sup>114</sup> Hickey, p. 121.

<sup>115</sup> Hickey, p. 121.

<sup>116</sup> Denno, p. 36.

<sup>117</sup> James F. Ray. “The District Advisor.” in Ramsey, p. 30.

be flexible about the concept of time; a counterpart's "attitude is not always appreciated by an American advisor who resents what sometimes strikes him as [an] eight-to-five o'clock attitude towards his nation's supposedly life-or-death struggle."<sup>118</sup> Therefore, advisors must exhibit patience and tolerance in order to maintain their peace of mind.<sup>119</sup> Clearly, there are some individuals who are too "high strung" and therefore must be considered unsuited for transition team duty.

Another essential trait of successful advisors is the need for adaptability. Common doctrine, standard operating procedures, and regulations are instilled into the professional U.S. Soldier. Unfortunately, host nation counterparts may have far different methods or beliefs, many of which have been developed through years of experience or are cultural in nature. The advisor must be an individual who is capable of rapid adjustment to changing situations, rather than an individual completely tied to American military routine or doctrine.<sup>120</sup>

Another key advisor attribute is empathy for others – "understanding and appreciating another person's viewpoint, ideals, mores, and objectives in life."<sup>121</sup> The advisor must literally attempt to place himself in his counterpart's shoes. While U.S. personnel will invariably leave after a relatively short "tour of duty," the counterpart will live with the conflict until it is complete, until he leaves the country, or until he is dead. Empathy is also related to the ability to transcend existing historical cultural differences that exist between the West and non-West. Because flamboyance or showboating can easily derail the potential to develop bonds, humility is another critical attribute for any advisor.<sup>122</sup>

Humility demands that the advisor "accept that his successes may be few and that such progress that is made will likely be the result of the seeds that he plants and that his

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<sup>118</sup> Denno, p. 36.

<sup>119</sup> Shelton, p. 68.

<sup>120</sup> Denno, p. 36.

<sup>121</sup> Hudlin, p. 45.

<sup>122</sup> Denno, p. 36, 41.

successors bring to fruition.”<sup>123</sup> Changes will be slow in many cases, based not only on the initial proficiency of the indigenous security forces, but also on cultural acceptance of changes weighed against age-old practices. Therefore, the advisor must set realistic goals that fit the unit’s capabilities rather than goals that might be ideal according to theory.

At first glance it might seem that no one harboring deep-rooted stereotypes, biases, or racism against a particular group of people should be an advisor. However all people generalize and stereotype to a degree. There are even military cultural generalities that might be exhibited, such as the well-established assumptions about the specific roles and responsibilities of rank. Even these generalities must be somewhat tempered in order to provide effective assistance to foreign units, in which rank may not relate to authority, but may relate more to lineage or seniority of service.<sup>124</sup> What is important is that prospective advisors be able to overcome their biases. Advisors cannot display them when dealing with their counterparts, much as individuals in U.S. society should not base their treatment of others on prejudice.<sup>125</sup> In considering an individual’s potential for such cultural tolerance, it is worth considering that members of minority groups or multicultural backgrounds (such as immigrant or multiracial backgrounds) may display an increased cultural sensitivity, adaptability, and integration into indigenous societies.<sup>126</sup>

In contrast to prejudice, some life experiences are valuable, and may be difficult-to-impossible to train. Insight, or the ability to “see the situation as it really is,” may be considered an essential attribute. Often, insight comes from an individual’s “willing openness to a variety of stimuli, from intellectual curiosity, from observation and reflection, from continuous evaluation and testing, from conversations and discussions, from review of discussions, from review of assumptions, from listening to the views of outsiders, and from the indispensable ingredient of humility.”<sup>127</sup> At the same time, over-

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<sup>123</sup> Shelton. p. 68.

<sup>124</sup> Strader, p. 97.

<sup>125</sup> Hudlin, p. 46.

<sup>126</sup> Dr. David Fittante, personal interview conducted at the Defense Language Institute, Monterey, CA, October 5, 2007.

<sup>127</sup> John H. Cushman. “Senior Officer Debriefing Report.” Headquarters, Delta Regional Assistance Command, APO San Francisco, January 14, 1962, in Ramsey, p. 49.

confidence in advisors is detrimental; “the man who believes he has the situation entirely figured out is a danger to himself and his mission.”<sup>128</sup>

Because advisors must be capable of making rapid and decisive judgments in ambiguous situations, we could say a certain level of “street smarts” is desirable. Careful consideration of an individual’s background should reveal how an individual will react in demanding situations.<sup>129</sup> But, the tendency of Americans to be “pragmatic, systematic, direct, and urgent” also needs to be taken into account. As a corollary to many Iraqi observations of U.S. troops, a Filipino observer of U.S. efforts in Vietnam noted that “It is . . . evident that the rush-rush-rush nature of the American way of doing things simply is far out of mesh with the slow and deliberate Asian way of getting things done.”<sup>130</sup> In many cases, Americans’ behavior might simply reflect the fact that they are serving with other Americans; their behavior *might* change when embedded with non-Americans. This, too, is something that selection should consider.

Selecting an individual for advisory duty requires identifying desirable skills and personal attributes. The identification of these traits should enable the U.S. Army to focus on specific personnel, and also provide an indication to potential advisor candidates of how well they potentially fit the advisory mission. With this it should be possible to establish specific screening, selection, and assessment processes.

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<sup>128</sup> Cushman, p. 49.

<sup>129</sup> Fittante.

<sup>130</sup> Denno, pp. 37-38.

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## V. TRANSITION TEAM SELECTION AND ASSESSMENT

*The time has come to introduce greater precision and, more important, greater thoroughness in our counterinsurgency personnel policies. . . . We must identify the areas of the world which will be in contention over the next decade so that the most time-consuming training . . . can be started now. . . . The task then becomes one of selecting the right individual for the job – the individual whose background, interest, and personality serve as bases on which to place the building blocks of extensive cultural background and economic problems and possibilities.<sup>131</sup>*

The above was penned by a young U.S. advisor to the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) over 45 years ago. It remains eerily relevant today, particularly as the Iraq conflict continues and the potential for new conflicts grows.

Critical to the success of the advisory effort is the resourcing of the advisory teams. Team members must be selected for their knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes, and exemplary service. Once team members are identified and teams assembled, an intense preparation regimen must be conducted. This preparation must be focused on many activities, such as physical readiness, foreign internal defense principles, small unit tactics, community policing, weapons proficiency (U.S. and host nation), employment of combined arms, combatatives (unarmed combat), language training, cultural awareness, communications, combat lifesaver, and tactical maneuver.

Selection of the proper personnel for any task is critical to achieving the desired result. In fact “[c]ommanders must assign the best qualified Soldiers and Marines to training and advisory missions . . . and may require using Reserve Component personnel.”<sup>132</sup>. Reserve component personnel, in general, may tend to be outstanding candidates for advisory duty because of interpersonal skills they have developed in the civilian environment and the life experiences that they can bring to bear.

There are two manpower considerations: fielding the cadre and filling the teams. Both draw from personnel already in the U.S. Army. Although it is worth contemplating

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<sup>131</sup> Jones, p. 15

<sup>132</sup> U.S. Army. FM 3-24: Counterinsurgency, p. 6-3.

the inclusion of joint, interagency, and perhaps international personnel in order to field truly effective teams, that is beyond the scope of this study. To field effective teams, the “cadre” must seek to provide true expertise. This may require involuntary assignment of selected former transition team personnel since there is absolutely no substitute for first-hand experience (especially foreign and combat duty).<sup>133</sup> At the same time, cadre should include those who can cover the military aspects of training as well as more academically-oriented coursework. Most academic experts are available only in the civilian realm, where entire lives are dedicated to the study of a specific niche. Building the cadre team, to include subject matter experts, will best prepare the transition teams for the complex environment that is Iraq. Ideally, the cadre should be comprised of both military and civilian experts who are capable of assessing and evaluating the capabilities and limitations of candidates. The best candidates for cadre and other staff are individuals who have experience in the subjects that they are teaching or training.

For personnel to be attracted to an organization, there must be some prestige associated with it; most soldiers want to be a part of a good outfit. Prestige is a by-product of things such as an illustrious organizational history, prominent past members, significant accomplishments, having state-of-the-art equipment, being well looked after by the military, etc. Traditionally, advisory duty has at best been viewed with disinterest by conventional military personnel and at worst was considered a career killer. It was “not considered particularly desirable, important, or popular.”<sup>134</sup> Because of this, advisory duty has often been associated with some type of incentive(s). An interesting study conducted in 1957 determined that given the isolation and operational tempo of being on advisory duty, advisors required “more frequent R&R than personnel serving with U.S. units.”<sup>135</sup> During the late Vietnam War period, volunteers for advisory duty “included a personal letter of invitation from the [Chief of Staff of the Army]; promotion preference; location preference in South Vietnam; preference for next assignment; special accommodations for family either stateside, Hawaii, or Guam; a two-week leave

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<sup>133</sup> U.S. Army. FM 3-24: Counterinsurgency, p. 6-16.

<sup>134</sup> Ramsey, p. 11.

<sup>135</sup> Ramsey, p. 20.



with family in Hawaii after 12 months; and a 30-day leave.”<sup>136</sup> This represents an extremely generous incentive package, and a similar modern program might well be exploited both for recruiting and retention purposes.

However, in today’s environment additional incentives might likewise be considered, such as the granting of Additional Skill Identifiers (ASI) for a soldier’s Primary Military Occupational Specialty (PMOS), a special skill insignia or tab (similar to a “Ranger” tab), or further specialty schooling (such as Pathfinder, Air Assault, etc).<sup>137</sup> Additional pay for this special duty could serve as another inducement, as is indicated by the many targeted special pays for understrength MOSs or hazardous duty for individuals on “jump status.”<sup>138</sup> However, financial inducements can also attract individuals for the wrong reasons. The goal should be to attract individuals with the desire *to be* advisors based on their ambitions and deep interest in a duty that is “vexing, enriching, challenging, and memorable,” rather than an ultimate interest in a larger salary.<sup>139</sup>

Certainly, the promise of combat duty appeals to many in the Army.<sup>140</sup> Although we are an Army at war, there are many personnel who have not yet been “in the right place at the right time,” and have therefore not participated in combat operations in Iraq or Afghanistan. Along with assignment to Iraq, comes the inevitable Shoulder Sleeve Insignia – Former Wartime Service (SSI-FWS), colloquially referred to as the “Combat Patch.” There is also the significant possibility of a soldier earning the coveted Combat Infantryman’s Badge (CIB), Combat Medic Badge (CMB), or Combat Action Badge (CAB), for direct combat with the enemy.

It must be noted that in order to attract high-quality personnel there must be some type of incentive for not only volunteering for advisory duty, but for serving subsequently as cadre. Again, choice of duty station, possible monetary incentives, and possible credit

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<sup>136</sup> Ramsey, p. 39.

<sup>137</sup> Nagl. “Institutionalizing Adaptation.”

<sup>138</sup> Rick Maze. “Streamlining Special Pay.” *Army Times*, ATPCO, Springfield, VA, May 28, 2007. p.8.

<sup>139</sup> Shelton, p. 69.

<sup>140</sup> Shelton, p. 69.

for completion of Key Developmental Positions are notable considerations. Consideration could also be given to increasing the value of these positions when personnel boards review individuals for promotion.<sup>141</sup>

With the appropriate cadre in place, we can turn to selecting the candidates for transition teams. As already indicated, these personnel must be mature, professional, competent, patient, knowledgeable, confident, culturally effective, situationally aware, and capable of operating with small teams in austere environments – all while being embedded in an indigenous force.<sup>142</sup> Some of these attributes, such as maturity, may be correlated with age or rank.<sup>143</sup> However, this warrants further study, since candidates also must be willing and capable of taking initiative and setting the standards for others to follow.<sup>144</sup> Combat experience *can* be an indicator of potential success as an advisor, but should not be considered a guarantor of suitability.<sup>145</sup>

Selection, according to the U.S. Army Special Forces Assessment and Selection (SFAS) course “assesses potential and qualities through behavioral observation, analysis via performance measure, and recording data.”<sup>146</sup> While SFAS is an actual activity that applicants attend, assessment begins prior to their arrival. Special Forces actually have a dedicated recruiting element that vets applicant records and capabilities before they attend SFAS.<sup>147</sup> Because advisory personnel must also be unique, selection should limit the candidate pool to “individuals who have the necessary professional competence [along with ‘cultural empathy’ or cross-cultural sensitivity] or can be taught it in a short

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<sup>141</sup> “Incentives Abound for Transition Team Members.” *Army Times*, ATPCO, Springfield, VA, January 29, 2007. The current concept intimates that advisory duty must be a consideration during promotion boards, but should not be used as an advantage over other personnel.

<sup>142</sup> Joint Center for International Security Force Assistance (JCISFA). “Advisor Basics.” PowerPoint slide presentation. Other characteristics that are desirable include “tactical cunning and mature judgment” according to FM 3-24 (Counterinsurgency, p. 7-2).

<sup>143</sup> Milburn and Lombard, p. 112.

<sup>144</sup> U.S. Army. *FM 3-24: Counterinsurgency*, p. 6-17.

<sup>145</sup> Strader, p. 95.

<sup>146</sup> U.S. Army Special Forces. “Overview: Special Forces Assessment and Selection.” (URL: [http://www.bragg.army.mil/specialforces/sf\\_training\\_overview.htm](http://www.bragg.army.mil/specialforces/sf_training_overview.htm)), accessed June 11, 2007.

<sup>147</sup> Special Operations Recruiting Battalion webpage (URL: <http://www.bragg.army.mil/sorb/>), accessed June 11, 2007.

time. . . . [in addition to those with] high motivation and intelligence, social ease, communication skills, adaptability to different food and customs, and organizational and leadership ability.”<sup>148</sup> To determine this entails both administrative examination of files, along with an on-site evaluation of each individual in the following areas: intelligence, trainability, physical fitness, motivation, ability to influence others, and judgment.<sup>149</sup>

Current selection criteria reflect attempts to mass-produce transition teams for the rapidly increasing Iraqi Security Forces. Individuals currently undergoing training at Fort Riley, KS, and Fort McCoy, WI, along with those employed in-theater represent a significant cross-section of the U.S. military. According to U.S. Army Human Resources Command, the only true requirements for selection to advisory duties are that individuals volunteer, or are involuntarily assigned based on “dwell time.”<sup>150</sup> The potential exists for individuals reporting for advisory training who have not fired a weapon in several years, soldiers (from both active and reserve components) who cannot meet physical requirements (they fail the APFT or are physically unable to carry required personal protective equipment, etc), individuals with racist views toward local or third-country nationals, and personnel who simply do not want to be advisors.<sup>151</sup> Indeed there are some instances of personnel reporting to Ft. Riley whose physical limitations prevent them from fully participating in necessary training activities, or who are unable to pass even the Army Physical Fitness Test.<sup>152</sup> Meanwhile, the lack of prior preparedness to conduct military duties (let alone advisory tasks) results in significant amounts of training time spent on honing basic soldiering tasks. During the 11-week transition team training

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<sup>148</sup> Hickey, pp. 172-173.

<sup>149</sup> U.S. Army Special Forces. “Overview: Special Forces Assessment and Selection.”

<sup>150</sup> U.S. Army Human Resources Command. “Dwell Time – Frequently Asked Questions.” Human Resources Command Website, (URL: [https://www.hrc.army.mil/site/protect/Active/opmd/Dwell\\_time/DT\\_Q\\_A.htm](https://www.hrc.army.mil/site/protect/Active/opmd/Dwell_time/DT_Q_A.htm)), accessed October 2, 2007. “Dwell Time” is defined as the time a soldier spends at home station between combat deployments, operational deployments (non-combat), or dependent restricted tours. HRC also stipulates that any individual selected for this duty be deemed high-quality personnel.

<sup>151</sup> Personal observation of author and commonly discussed in Vietnam-era documents. In this case, “racism” is defined as “[t]he belief that race accounts for differences in human character or ability and that a particular race is superior to others; [d]iscrimination or prejudice based on race.” racist. (n.d.). *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition*. Retrieved October 24, 2007, from Dictionary.com website: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/racist>.

<sup>152</sup> John Nagl, personal interview conducted in Spring, 2007.

at Fort Riley, approximately 70% of the time is spent on basic military training, and 30% on advisor-specific training.<sup>153</sup> Therefore, advisor-specific tasks are not fully addressed and the result is lower levels of potential performance by fielded transition teams.

As a former U.S. advisor in El Salvador has remarked, “good soldiers are the starting point, but by themselves are not enough.”<sup>154</sup> The outstanding performance of an individual in a conventional troop-command billet must not be the sole determining factor; the “undiluted military officer, accustomed to command and limited by tradition to military considerations, sometimes falls far short of qualifying for counterinsurgent warfare, where he alone often represents all the departments and activities of the United States.”<sup>155</sup> Indeed, as a USMC officer with advisory experience in Iraq has noted, “[s]everal Marines with solid reputations have proven to be ineffective advisors because they lacked the patience to work within a culture that places little emphasis on qualities that we regard as being indispensable to military life.”<sup>156</sup> Conversely, outstanding advisors may display traits that cut against accepted “command” characteristics, such as “[a] marked empathy with others, an ability to accommodate, a certain unilaterally philosophical or reflective bent, a kind of waywardness or independence, and the like” although the individuals must maintain mission-orientation, well being, appearance, and overall tone of both U.S. and indigenous troops, at the highest standard. In fact, as the U.S. advisor commanding general who offered this description further went on to say “we need to look for good advisors who may not be all-purpose officers.”<sup>157</sup>

A Special Forces veteran who advised troops in Vietnam, Thailand, and Korea noted in 1965 that “[w]e are still using the age-old approach to our newly acquired problem, and professional competence and military know-how are considered as the dominating factors in selecting advisors.”<sup>158</sup> This seems true today, too, with general

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<sup>153</sup> Cavagnol.

<sup>154</sup> Banner., p. 73.

<sup>155</sup> Jones, p. 15.

<sup>156</sup> Milburn and Lombard, pp. 112-113.

<sup>157</sup> Cushman, p. 51.

<sup>158</sup> Hudlin, p. 46.

selection criteria based on volunteering or involuntary assignment. Involuntary assignment to a transition team can be expected by any soldier who meets varied criteria displaying military proficiency, along with twelve months or more of “dwell time.”<sup>159</sup> The following briefing slide identifies the emphasis that the Army is placing on these teams.<sup>160</sup>



The image is a briefing slide titled "Military Transition Teams (MTT)". It features the Army's "Mission First" logo on the top left and the U.S. Army Human Resources Command logo on the top right. The title is centered at the top. Below the title is a list of seven bullet points detailing the Army's priorities for MTTs. The slide concludes with the slogan "PEOPLE ALWAYS... MISSION FIRST!" in a yellow box at the bottom left.

### Military Transition Teams (MTT)

- Resourcing these teams with the right Soldiers is one of the Army's top priorities
- TT assignments provide important developmental opportunities for the Army's 21st Century leaders
- Only fully qualified officers and NCO's are chosen to fill these critical positions, based upon their grade, skill, and experience match, balanced with dwell.
- **New Language for Board MOI's for officers who have served on Transition Teams**
- Majority of assignments do not offer a choice of PCS locations; only transition team offer this as an incentive to Soldiers. PCS to Kuwait or Fort Riley with further TCS to the deployed theater of operations.
- MTT assignments entitle Soldiers to a follow-on assignment of choice within Army Requirements.
- Teach and mentor Iraqi and Afghani officers and Soldiers

**PEOPLE ALWAYS... MISSION FIRST!**

Figure 2. Military Transition Team (MTT) Emphasis

As a currently-serving battalion commander for the development of transition teams remarked, “soldiers have been posted to this unit ‘on an ad hoc basis’ and few of the officers selected to train them have ever been advisers themselves.”<sup>161</sup>

Subsequent interviews with various representatives from the U.S. Army Human Resources Command further clarify assignment goals. Team chiefs are generally

<sup>159</sup> “Armor Branch Chief Notes.” Human Resources Command, Armor Branch Website, (URL: [https://www.hrc.army.mil/site/protect/Active/oparmor/talking\\_points.doc](https://www.hrc.army.mil/site/protect/Active/oparmor/talking_points.doc)), accessed October 3, 2007.

<sup>160</sup> U.S. Army Surface Deployment and Distribution Command website. Combat Service Support Division PowerPoint briefing, (URL: [www.sddc.army.mil/EXTRACONTENT/LPCC%20Briefings/01\\_SDDC%20PCC%20Brief%20Final-9%20Feb%2007.ppt](http://www.sddc.army.mil/EXTRACONTENT/LPCC%20Briefings/01_SDDC%20PCC%20Brief%20Final-9%20Feb%2007.ppt)), accessed October 22, 2007.

<sup>161</sup> Kaplan, “Challenging the Generals.”

selected based on their past performance, especially performance in past leadership positions. Other officers on these teams receive transition team assignments based on their availability and not just past performance. The non-commissioned officers assigned to the teams typically are similarly selected.<sup>162</sup>

While there are certainly desired attributes for all these individuals, in reality the population of transition team personnel varies. In essence, volunteers are eagerly accepted with minimal regard to actual qualifications and / or abilities. For example, one recent transition team candidate was an older female non-commissioned officer. Clearly, she might not be the most suitable candidate to conduct combat advisory activities with a misogynistic Iraqi military organization. Furthermore, poor technical and tactical abilities, along with physical weaknesses, may turn her (or someone like her) into a liability for her comrades-in-arms. Yet, she is nevertheless going to be assigned to an operational transition team in Iraq.

In contrast to the take-all-comers approach still in effect for the transition teams themselves, there is some movement towards ensuring qualified individuals return to advisory-related training and operational tasks at Fort Riley, KS. Some personnel also return to transition teams for follow-on deployments, or to cadre assignments with 1-1 ID.

As far back as the Korean War, adequate selection of advisors was considered critical. As one report listed the recommended traits back then:<sup>163</sup>

- The officer's professional competence, preferably demonstrated by command experience – including combat command if possible – for advisors to line units.
  
- Special screening of officers and enlisted men for qualities temperament and fortitude to withstand the strenuous psychological and physical demands of advisory duty in tactical units of a local national army, particularly under combat conditions.

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<sup>162</sup> Warren Sponsler, U.S. Army Armor Branch Majors Assignments Manager, personal interview conducted in Spring, 2007.

<sup>163</sup> Ramsey, p. 22.

- Personal characteristics of tact, patience, emotional stability, self-sufficiency, and self-discipline that will enable the officer to work effectively and harmoniously with local national personnel and that will induce a respect and confidence in Americans and the U.S.
- Preference to officers with facility in the local language.

An early study of advisory efforts in Vietnam likewise determined that vigilant selection of advisory personnel would redress many of the shortcomings identified in those sent to be advisors. This study recommended the following selection criteria:<sup>164</sup>

- To ensure strong motivation for the task, it would be well to place advisory service on a voluntary basis if at all possible.
- Whether service is compulsory or voluntary, a careful screening process should be devised to test a candidate's suitability from the point of view of (a) professional equipment [essentially the candidate's experience and performance]; (b) adaptability to foreign cultures; (c) a temperamental disposition, especially in the case of prospective field advisors, to share dangers, hardships, exotic food, and primitive shelter with members of an oriental civilization; (d) existing linguistic skills or the ability to acquire languages easily; (e) the possibility of "culture fatigue" in a man who, though otherwise qualified, has had too many overseas assignments and is not keen on another.

As has already been noted, selection of advisory personnel should be conducted in three specific steps. First is the screening of possible advisory personnel. This entails identifying eligible servicemembers, and then analyzing their qualifications. Second, candidates should be assessed for their suitability. Finally, they must be continually monitored and evaluated in order to ensure that they remain capable of performing in the intense, obscure, and often remote environment in which advisors operate.

In order to help with *self*-selection for advisory duty, individuals must clearly understand the advisor's roles prior to competing for this assignment. While there is copious literature that discusses transition teams and advisor-related duty now available to the military community, some effort must be made by the organization to characterize advisor traits, missions, and expectations. By identifying the "good, the bad, and the

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<sup>164</sup> Hickey, p. 124.

ugly,” – especially the bad and the ugly – clearly inappropriate candidates may “deselect” themselves. Providing as transparent a depiction of life on a transition team as possible should assist people in deciding whether they are suited for this duty.

## **A. SCREENING**

The initial requirement for determining selection is identification of the population eligible to become advisors. This thesis assumes that the entire U.S. Army, to include all Reserve Components, will provide the candidates.<sup>165</sup> However, while all personnel must be considered eligible to apply for advisory duties, there must be specific individual pre-selection qualification criteria met prior to moving on to further selection processes.

The initial screening process generally serves to screen people out, with the aim “to detect an unwanted substance or attribute.”<sup>166</sup> A possible method for screening individuals recommended by a USMC officer is:

- Screening by the monitor for suitability. Preference should be given to those Marines, officer and enlisted, who have been instructors or have already served advisory tours.
- Command endorsement, completed and signed by the Marine’s commanding officer.
- Individual or group interview by key FMTU [Foreign Military Training Unit] personnel, to include former advisors.
- Probationary status until completion of the basic advisor course. This can be accomplished by issuing the Marine temporary additional duty orders for the course.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> A possible topic for future study must be the inclusion of all Armed Forces components, along with local, state, and federal governmental employees in advisory teams. Institutions such as the Department of State, state governmental institutions, and even municipal law enforcement agencies may serve to provide a significant talent pool that can be co-opted into federal service.

<sup>166</sup> screening. (n.d.). *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition*. Retrieved October 02, 2007, from Dictionary.com website: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/screening>

<sup>167</sup> Milburn and Lombard, p. 113.



While the above offers an excellent set of guidelines, it may be too broad in some areas (such as suitability preferences), yet too narrow in others (such as individual interviews just given the larger size of the Army versus the Marine Corps). Accordingly, the following table offers a more specific set of guidelines:

<u>Screening Criteria</u>	<u>Selection Criteria</u>	<u>Deselection Criteria</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Chain of Command Recommendation	DA Form 4187 from first O6-level commander stating that the applicant is fully qualified to participate in the advisory selection process	DA Form 4187 states that individual is <u>not</u> qualified to participate in the advisory selection process; narrative must be included that indicates the particular reasons that the candidate is <u>not</u> qualified, with concurrence by the first General Officer in the Soldier's chain of command	Future DA policy must state that any individual desiring to compete for advisory selection will be allowed; no application will be denied without supporting documentation (as stated in Deselection Criteria)
Security Clearance	Must possess a minimum of SECRET clearance	Individual has no security clearance	Interim security clearance may be considered if SECRET clearance is pending
Physical Readiness	Must have completed and passed the Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT) within 90 days of application	- APFT conducted >90 days prior to application - Applicant failed APFT	Applicants may take an APFT during in-processing activities at the selection & assessment location at the discretion of the assessment unit commander
Weapons Qualification Must have qualified as a Marksman at a minimum, with both M9 pistol and M4/M16-series rifle within 90 days of application	- Weapons qualification >90 days prior to application	- Failed to qualify on either weapon	Individuals must be qualified on personal weapons prior to training to maximize efficiency of follow-on training; either weapons qualification scorecards or "memoranda for record" are suitable proof of qualification
Defense Language Aptitude Battery Score	Minimum score of 85	Score below 85	Applicant must demonstrate the potential to develop foreign language skills; may be waivable based on other qualifications

<u>Screening Criteria</u>	<u>Selection Criteria</u>	<u>Deselection Criteria</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Medical Readiness	Current physical within one year of application identifying applicant as “fit for duty” (Initial Medical Review – Annual Medical Certificate, DA 7349, March 2002)	- Physical completed >1 year prior to application - Physical identifies applicant as “not fit for duty”	Applicants must be determined healthy within this window because the expectation is that duties will be in remote locations for long durations
Civilian Education / Background / Experiences	None	None	Outstanding qualifications may be used as a basis to allow participation in training, or as a mitigating factor to shortcomings in other screening criteria at the discretion of the selection & assessment unit commander

Table 2. Proposed Combat Advisor Screening Criteria

Each specific area is discussed in more detail below.

### **1. Chain of Command Recommendation**

The applicant must submit a Department of the Army Form 4187 (Request for Personnel Action) stating the intent to participate in selection for transition team assignment.<sup>168</sup> This form will be furnished through the chain of command to the first Colonel / O6-level commander for recommendation of approval or disapproval.

An approved application will include the applicant’s current Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT) Scorecard, a memorandum for record identifying current weapons qualification status, and a statement that the applicant meets all preliminary selection requirements.<sup>169</sup>

A disapproved application will include a memorandum for record identifying the reasons for recommending disapproval of the application. Specific information

<sup>168</sup> Department of the Army, “DA Form 4187: Personnel Action,” January 2000.

<sup>169</sup> Department of the Army, “DA Form 705: Army Physical Fitness Test Scorecard,” June 1999. For the statement of certifies the three, there is no pre-existing format. For such a document, possible inclusion of this information on the DA 4187 is possible

pertaining to the disqualification criteria must be addressed. Applicants may dispute any denied application. However, dispute processes will not be addressed in this thesis.

The applicant's chain of command is responsible for the submission of all packets to the office with proponency for fielding transition teams whether recommending or opposing the individual for advisory duty. This allows the organization responsible for fielding transition teams to consider packets not approved by local commanders so as to prevent commanders from arbitrarily denying personnel from leaving their units. Commanders would thus not only be personally responsible for the quality of applicants they do send, but won't be able to keep all quality individuals in their units.

## **2. Security Clearance**

The nature of tactical operations and advisory activities requires a reliable individual who can be expected to access and protect classified information. Advisors will participate in sensitive planning activities, assessments, and operations while working with indigenous forces. Individuals lacking the basic ability to meet these requirements should not be selected for a transition team. However, if the individual's security clearance process has been initiated and he is reasonably expected to be granted a SECRET clearance at a minimum, then the individual may be provided a waiver accompanied by an interim SECRET clearance.<sup>170</sup>

## **3. Physical Readiness**

Applicants must arrive for the "Assessment Phase" in satisfactory physical condition. The common basis for determination of a Soldier's level of physical fitness is the Army Physical Fitness test, consisting of timed muscular strength and endurance activities (two minutes each for push-ups and sit-ups), and a timed two-mile run to test cardiovascular endurance. The minimum standards for passing this test serve as a benchmark to indicate an individual's ability to physically accomplish battlefield tasks.

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<sup>170</sup> U.S. Army. AR 380-67: Personnel Security Program. Headquarters, Department of the Army, Washington, DC, Paragraph 7-101, p. 24. This regulation proscribes the appropriate criteria and procedures for granting personnel security clearances.

Furthermore, the APFT is familiar across all branches and units of the U.S. Army, because every Soldier is required to pass this test semi-annually.<sup>171</sup>

The reason this test should be successfully completed in advance of selection to attend the Assessment Phase is that current demands preclude extensive physical conditioning. In short, assessment and training must focus on activities that directly relate to the advisory mission; extra attention paid to the Army's *baseline* requirements simply cost too much time.

At the same time, the inclusion of additional training requirements, such as pull-ups, 12-mile timed roadmarches, or 5-mile timed runs could unnecessarily disqualify individuals capable of serving on transition teams.<sup>172</sup>

#### **4. Weapons Qualification**

The requirement for proof of prior weapons qualification mirrors the general idea of requiring all personnel to be proficient on common weapons systems. Once again, dedicating additional training time to skills that are already required by regulation detracts from training. Individuals who fail to qualify on the necessary weapons, or whose qualification is more than 90 days old on the date of application, should be considered ineligible for selection until qualification is accomplished.

#### **5. Defense Language Aptitude Battery (DLAB) Score**

Transition teams will train, fight, and live with indigenous forces. Team members must have some identified proclivity to developing some skills in the local dialect. The current standard for determining this is the Defense Language Aptitude Battery (DLAB). This test utilizes a fictional language, and the test-taker is expected to display the ability to “learn” a foreign language based on rudimentary instruction.

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<sup>171</sup> U.S. Army. FM 21-20: Physical Fitness Training (with Change 1). Headquarters, Department of the Army, Washington, DC, October 1, 1998.

<sup>172</sup> Some U.S. Army specialty training schools, such as Airborne, Ranger, Air Assault, and Special Forces require specialized physical fitness qualification standards in order to participate in the training activity.

The current standard for an individual to be enrolled in formal basic Arabic language training at the Defense Language Institute (DLI) is a score of 100.<sup>173</sup> However, individuals selected for specialized linguistic training are expected to serve as stand-alone interpreters / translators (I/Ts). This score should be relaxed for transition team candidates, because though they will be expected to have some understanding of local dialects, they will have native-speaker I/Ts available for the conduct of most daily tasks. The ability to develop a working knowledge of the local dialect helps to set conditions for further development during advisor training in the U.S., and practical day-to-day application while with the indigenous unit. In reviewing potential foreign language capability, it must be noted that for Category I languages (such as French or Spanish), the individuals who attained a DLAB score of 85 or greater were most likely to complete the language training curriculum at the Defense Language Institute.<sup>174</sup> Therefore, to develop a rudimentary capability in Arabic it is recommended that the baseline score for advisor candidates be 85.

Finally, existing linguistic capabilities must be identified and emphasized during the selection process independent of DLAB scores.<sup>175</sup> Multi-lingual personnel, even those without local language capability, may acquire additional language skills more easily than mono-lingual personnel. Therefore, some ability to “waive” lower DLAB scores among these individuals must be considered.

## **6. Medical Readiness**

The requirements to field effective transition teams within constrained timelines necessitate the full medical readiness of transition team candidates. To ensure the highest probability of success, a recent medical physical exam must certify the individual as fit

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<sup>173</sup> U.S. Army. Defense Language Institute Online Catalog, [http://www.dlilfc.edu/academics/academic\\_affairs/dli\\_catalog/resident.htm](http://www.dlilfc.edu/academics/academic_affairs/dli_catalog/resident.htm) (accessed October 2, 2007).

<sup>174</sup> Chin Han Wong. “An Analysis of Factors Predicting Graduation of Students at Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center.” Naval Postgraduate School Masters Degree Thesis, Monterey, CA, December 2004.

<sup>175</sup> U.S. Army. FM 3-24: Counterinsurgency, p. C-1.

for duty. In the instance of a candidate who is declared not fit, follow-on medical examinations must be conducted prior to assignment to the Assessment Phase.

The recent requirement for U.S. Army personnel to receive an annual Periodic Health Assessment (PHA) means that medical issues should be identified that previously may have only been identified during the complete physical exam conducted every five years. The PHA also integrates information from routine or emergency clinic visits into a database. Combining the PHA with a mandatory Annual Health Assessment will minimize extra requirements for medical examinations of advisory candidates. The final approval for an individual to conduct advisory duties is certification by the medical provider that the soldier is fit to deploy to an “austere” environment for at least 30 days.<sup>176</sup>

## **7. Civilian Education / Background / Experiences**

Pertinent advisory skills are not necessarily only martial in nature. Indeed, “most successful advisors tend to be those whom life experience and personality have qualified for the role.”<sup>177</sup> The candidate’s background, to include language skills, ethnicity, educational degrees, prior overseas residence, and civilian employment should be considered for what they offer to the advisory mission.<sup>178</sup> Furthermore, fully qualified applicants with unique backgrounds may be selected for placement within specific teams to broaden the team’s operational capability. For example, it may be highly beneficial for a second-generation Iraqi-American whose family emigrated from Tikrit, to be assigned to a Military Transition Team that will be operating with an Iraqi Army unit assigned to Salaheddin province. Likewise, an advisor who was a bank employee in civilian life may be earmarked for an Iraqi Army administrative unit Military Transition Team (regardless of his current Military Occupational Specialty). Lastly, a Reservist employed with

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<sup>176</sup> Francis J. Harvey and Peter J. Schoomaker. “Periodic Health Assessment.” Memorandum for selected Department of the Army elements, Washington, DC, October 12, 2006. This document directs that all commands are responsible for ensuring that their personnel maintain medical readiness, and for commands to ensure that any medical issues be addressed in a timely manner.

<sup>177</sup> Hickey, p. 146.

<sup>178</sup> Franklin Lindsay. Beacons in the Night. Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA, 1993.

civilian law enforcement may be a perfect candidate to be assigned to an intelligence position within a transition team, given the “criminal nature” of counterinsurgent networks.

The current selection criteria do very little to field personnel appropriate to advisory missions. In order to truly “select” individuals, there must be actual criteria in place that address the anticipated assignment based on the requirements of that assignment. Clear criteria to “select” and “deselect” should be put in place by those who are intimately familiar with the specific mission requirements. As such, the individual attributes of the eligible population must be thoroughly evaluated against what is needed and volunteers should be screened for their advisory potential as opposed to their “promotion potential” or potential to simply fill a slot. Only properly qualified personnel should be assigned to teams, though the ideal would be for specific personnel to be assigned to specific teams based on their individual capabilities and history.

## **B. ASSESSMENT**

This phase should be conducted at a centralized location for all applicants who pass through the screening process. The most likely location for this activity is Fort Riley, KS, because that where all current transition teams train. The assessment process should consist of a battery of objective and subjective evaluations that determine the suitability of these individuals for advisory duties. The evaluation should measure psychological, intellectual, and interpersonal skills. Table 3 identifies the general requirements to be evaluated during the Assessment Phase and each is discussed in further detail below.

	Selection Criteria	Deselection Criteria	Comments
Physical	Demonstrates the ability to maintain appropriate operational tempo	Incapable of maintaining pace with the rest of the team	Subjective judgement by team leadership and cadre
Psychological	Demonstrates sound behavioral health	Determined unfit for advisory duty by both behavioral health professional and cadre.	Qualification is determined by behavioral health personnel
Intellectual	Demonstrates the ability to understand advanced concepts; provide written and spoken information	Unable to grasp concepts; poor written and spoken skills	Subjective; performance-based in conjunction with team leadership and cadre
Interpersonal	Demonstrates the ability to operate with a small team	Incapable of maintaining bearing or relationship with team members	Subjective judgement by team leadership and cadre

Table 3. Proposed Combat Advisor Selection Criteria

### 1. Physical Assessment

As alluded to previously, the APFT requirement provides a benchmark for the physical fitness of incoming candidates. However, the modern operating environment requires more than cursory physical tasks. In particular, soldiers must operate with heavy loads that include body armor, weapons (M4, M9, possibly including M203 Grenade Launcher), ammunition (or devices that simulate appropriate weight for an individual's basic load), water, along with necessary other items. Based on after actions reviews of combat personnel in Iraq, soldiers must be expected to perform all tasks while fully equipped, to include climbing, extended chases, casualty evacuation, detention of enemy personnel and, most obviously, conducting actual combat operations.<sup>179</sup> Accordingly, soldiers must prove capable of operating with this gear during the assessment phase. All aspects of the assessment phase must be conducted with full combat gear to identify

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<sup>179</sup> Todd J. Clark. "Train for the Fight." *ARMOR Magazine*, Fort Knox, KY, May-June 2004.



individuals incapable of sustained operations. In general, the physical assessment will simply consist of conducting daily activities without significant impediment due to the increased equipment load.

## **2. Psychological Assessment**

Forward-deployed units embedded with indigenous forces can expect to operate in austere environments with minimal and sometimes ambiguous command guidance. Living conditions for Iraqi forces are far different from U.S. military norms. Likewise, the physical separation of advisory teams from U.S. forces in many cases forces significant improvisation for both living arrangements and activities. To ensure that teams adapt in a way that is congruent with U.S. interests and command intent, advisors must display “persistence, forcefulness, and patience, as well as judgment to know which quality is going to be most effective in a particular situation.”<sup>180</sup> Because personnel who are patient, perseverant, reflective, and empathetic appear to perform well, these attributes should be carefully evaluated during training, and also by behavioral health personnel who specialize in behavioral assessments.<sup>181</sup>

Corporate research as early as the 1960s revealed that simple attention to identifying psychological characteristics can signify the potential to successfully complete overseas assignments. That, in turn, can increase selection efficiency. For instance, the Standard Oil Company provided a claim of a 20% increase in such selection efficiency by simply using “six standardized psychological tests during the selection process.”<sup>182</sup>

Qualified Behavioral Health Specialists should administer a series of tests, to include the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT).<sup>183</sup> The TAT is “used to stimulate stories or descriptions about relationships or social situations and can help identify dominant

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<sup>180</sup> Milburn and Lombard, p. 112.

<sup>181</sup> JCISFA. “Transition Team Handbook (Draft),” p. 3.

<sup>182</sup> Hickey, p. 172.

<sup>183</sup> Fittante.

drives, emotions, sentiments, conflicts and complexes.”<sup>184</sup> The test is administered to a group of candidates and completed in written form by each individual. This can provide a basis by which to judge how an individual will perform with small teams in an isolated austere environment. The specialist or assessor would then determine whether the individual is qualified or disqualified for advisor duty, or whether he warrants a follow-up examination.

In the search for likely advisors, military and civilian cadre will ideally find candidates who “like their work and have the right personality for it.”<sup>185</sup> For example, a candidate who frequently loses control of his emotions, fails to accomplish required tasks when under mental duress, or significantly (and grossly) changes his routine, may not be suited to operate in a relatively autonomous combat advisory environment. Final determinations of fitness should be based on the evaluations of both military and mental health professionals.

### **3. Intellectual Assessment**

Complex situations that are encountered in advisory environments demand that individuals be capable of making rapid, correct decisions, and concise plans of action. These plans must be based on accomplishing the desired end state given available assets. Individuals must demonstrate consistent logical reasoning and critical thinking to ensure that the mission is accomplished. In short, individuals who are selected to proceed to the actual transition team training must be intelligent problem-solvers who are decisive and able to plan and execute quickly and effectively.

### **4. Interpersonal Assessment**

Transition teams operate within larger units. The teams routinely spend large amounts of time conducting operations that require synchronization, extensive coordination, and group harmony. Each member of the team must be a “team player”

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<sup>184</sup> H.A. Murray, PhD. “TAT (Thematic Apperception Test).” Pearson Assessments for Clinical and Psychological Use, (URL: <http://www.pearsonassessments.com/tests/tat.htm>), accessed October 5, 2007.

<sup>185</sup> Hickey, p. 146.

who flourishes while working with a group. These critical skills should be assessed through peer reviews and evaluations, and also by cadre observations, while the candidate is “in an environment that closely resembles the one he will encounter on the job.”<sup>186</sup> Individuals deemed to be incapable of extended operations in an environment requiring close and effective teamwork must be assessed as “not suited for advisory duties.”

### **C. SELECTION FOR ADVISORY DUTIES**

Research during the Vietnam War showed that, “[w]ithout doubt, finding the officers and men capable of becoming outstanding advisors is the single most important step” for assisting host nation forces.<sup>187</sup> The end state of pre-selection and assessment is either “selection” or “deselection” to proceed to the formal advisor training regimen conducted by units at Fort Riley, KS. Selection represents “[a] carefully chosen or representative collection of people.”<sup>188</sup> Such a process would provide the U.S. Army those personnel most suited to be military advisors to indigenous forces.

Only those physically, mentally, and professionally prepared for advisor duties should be selected. Further, a properly conducted selection process will accomplish the following:<sup>189</sup>

- Eliminate those individuals whose motivation is low or are basically incapable of adapting themselves to another culture.
- Identify individuals, although “well qualified by personality and experience to do the job successfully,” cannot adjust to the environment or counterparts.

By deselecting personnel not capable of performing advisory duties, the U.S. Army will provide the “best and brightest” to the efforts in Iraq, thus facilitating the

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<sup>186</sup> Hickey, p. 173.

<sup>187</sup> Hickey, p. 147.

<sup>188</sup> selection. (n.d.). *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition*. Retrieved October 02, 2007, from Dictionary.com website:

<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/selection>

<sup>189</sup> Hickey, p. 146. The author further notes on page 173 that “[S]kill cannot be separated from motivation. Most people, unless they have severe personality disorders, can learn at least some . . . skills if they want to – and if time is available.”

redeployment of U.S. combat forces once security responsibilities have been successfully transferred from Coalition to Iraqi Security Forces. However, to make selection sufficiently attractive, no negative stigma can be attached to “non-selected” personnel. It has to be understood that they simply did not meet the peculiar criteria of advisor duties. Depending on the reason for deselection, candidates may be allowed to reattempt advisory selection in the future.

Advisor monitoring and evaluation should be continuous to maintain the quality of advisor teams. Assessment should not end with completion of advisory preparation activities. Preliminary evaluations may err in estimating an individual’s potential.<sup>190</sup> Some personnel may not be capable of performing this mission for long periods. Others may not be able to perform once deployed to a foreign, austere environment. Either way, team members must constantly reassess their own fitness as well as that of their peers in order to ensure that mission critical activities can continue to be performed with as little disruption as possible.

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<sup>190</sup> Hickey, p. 174.

## VI. TRANSITION TEAM PREPARATION ACTIVITIES

*The ability to advise a counterpart is an art which – as one authority on counterinsurgency has emphasized – has yet to be spelled out (and perhaps never will be completely) in field manuals. Yet, like leadership, it is a skill which can presumably be acquired through study and practice.*<sup>191</sup>

Two essential elements required to build effective transition teams are the appointment of skilled cadre that actually mold these teams, and the careful selection of advisory candidates because “the skills necessary for working with foreign nationals can be taught only partially.”<sup>192</sup> Cadre are “[a] nucleus of trained personnel around which a larger organization can be built and trained.”<sup>193</sup> As such, these personnel must be experts at the tasks they are assessing and instructing. Cadre are currently selected based primarily on availability and are drawn largely from personnel currently stationed at Fort Riley. Individuals may or may not have combat or advisory experience, although most will have some subject matter expertise and experience in task instruction.<sup>194</sup> Presumably all are military; limited research confirms this assumption.

All personnel who perform screening must be considered fully qualified based on their professional accreditation as medical doctors, psychologists, commanders, etc. Likewise, cadre members should be chosen based on their proven successful performance in advisory roles.

At the moment, there is minimal integration of civilian experts into the training cadre. Yet, career academics or former foreign-service personnel who have spent a lifetime gaining expertise in a specific subject matter, would be critical to ensuring that teams receive the right area-specific education during later preparation activities. To

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<sup>191</sup> Denno, pp. 34-35.

<sup>192</sup> Hickey, p. 146.

<sup>193</sup> cadre. Dictionary.com. *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition*. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/cadre> (accessed: June 11, 2007).

<sup>194</sup> Note that in early- to mid-2006, an Army-wide call was put out to current / previous transition team member to transfer to Fort Riley, KS, to cadre assignments.

highlight the importance of adding civilian cadre (or “faculty”), it is worth pointing out that “[m]ilitary forces can perform civilian tasks but often not as well as the civilian agencies with people trained in those skills. Further, military forces performing civilian tasks are not performing military tasks.”<sup>195</sup> In essence, civilian experts are better utilized teaching subjects in their respective area of expertise, allowing military experts to teach military subjects.<sup>196</sup>

The aim of incorporating training and education in both military and non-military topics is to create teams that are both competent and confident for their assignments in Iraq. They must *feel* proficient in a number of areas in order to successfully assimilate and integrate into indigenous units. Additionally, they need this proficiency in order to share their knowledge and develop indigenous forces. Indeed, the ability to mentor and develop such forces is arguably the essence of their purpose. Regardless of whether the preparation activity is training or education, there should be a maximum effort made to provide individuals with first-hand knowledge of the area of operations.<sup>197</sup> Displaced or émigré Iraqis would make ideal role players in situational training activities. Academic experts who hail from Iraq should also be incorporated whenever possible, along with other experts with extensive travel history to the region.

Civilian subject matter experts who have dedicated their lives to mastery of a particular subject (anthropology, political science, religion, language, etc) should teach the non-military educational classes. A model for a suggested schedule model may be found in the French Commando School located in Djibouti.<sup>198</sup> Of note is that educational classes and military training tasks are alternated daily; educational classes in the morning and training after noon, or vice versa. Such a schedule allows material to be taught

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<sup>195</sup> U.S. Army. FM 3-24: Counterinsurgency, p. 2-9. This document also states on page 3-2 that “university professors . . . can also be of great benefit.”

<sup>196</sup> U.S. Army. FM 3-24: Counterinsurgency, p. A-1. By employing civilian “educators,” this may necessitate that the preparation activity takes on a “learning institution”-type attitude as a military training institution. Further attention may be devoted to the benefit added to requiring completion of “scholastic” assignments such as reports, homework, tests, etc.

<sup>197</sup> U.S. Army. FM 3-24: Counterinsurgency, p. A-2.

<sup>198</sup> Bradley Shaver, Sergeant, U.S. Marine Corps. “American and French Forces Make History with Commando School.” Military Connections website, December 7, 2003. (URL: [http://militaryconnections.com/news\\_story.cfm?textnewsid=685](http://militaryconnections.com/news_story.cfm?textnewsid=685)), accessed June 11, 2007.

cumulatively on multiple subjects over several days as opposed to one subject per day, similar to the way classes are run in civilian educational institutions (see Figure 3). It also permits alternating sedentary in-the-classroom and physically strenuous training activities.

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
0600-0730		Team Physical Training					
0900-1050		Arabic					BLUFOR Tracker
1000-1150		Cultural Awareness					
1300-1350		Unconventional Warfare		Combat Life Saver (CLS)			
1400-1450		Drivers Licensing	M4 Carbine Zero				Close Quarters Combat
1500-1550		Equipment Issue					
1600-1650		MBITR Operation	M9 Pistol Familiar				
1900-0550	Leader meeting						

Figure 3. Sample proposed daily team schedule.

Teams must conduct all preparatory activities, to include classroom education, as a unit. Shared hardships and constant interaction facilitate team building and produce the *esprit de corps* necessary for small units in combat situations. This also allows some level of cohort selection / deselection in that team members can observe each others' actions, and perhaps provide feedback to cadre members.

The preparation period must allow the opportunity for team building and interpersonal development. By providing the teams freedom outside of their training schedule, members can conduct team-building activities. These activities may include team meetings, team outings, problem-solving activities, etc..<sup>199</sup> The aim should be to produce a small unit capable of conducting virtually independent operations in a hostile environment for approximately one year – while still cohering. Meanwhile, consideration also needs to be given to family time and family team-building since team members will need to feel confident that their families are likewise cohering in their absence.

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<sup>199</sup> Cavagnol.

After the initial selection of advisor candidates, individuals can be assigned to a “specialty position.” Ideally, the team leader would select individuals to be “specialists” who already have particular skills or interests: e.g., someone with automotive skills would be assigned to maintenance training, a weapons-savvy individual would become a weapons specialist, personnel proficient with communications equipment would attend that block of instruction, etc. Some of this can be based on an individual’s primary military occupational specialty, additional skill identifiers, civilian background and education, or simply on an individual’s preferences or hobbies. A fringe benefit from slotting an individual into a subject with which he feels comfortable is that he will retain interest in the subject and that ensures that he will get the most out of the training.

The end state of the institutional training activity should produce enough qualified teams to embed with each identified Iraqi unit. At the end of training, the teams should be capable of planning, preparation, execution, and assessment of all team missions.<sup>200</sup> Each team must emerge from Fort Riley capable of being: “[embedded as a] *link* with partner unit, [a]dvisors to the Iraqi Command, [r]esources to Coalition Units to better their understanding of Iraqi units, [p]art of The Team, NOT [only] liaison, NOT a fire and forget mission, NOT a supporting effort, [and] NOT part of the Iraqi Chain of Command.”<sup>201</sup>

The figure below sketches one possible way to arrange all of this: selection, preparation, and unity of effort. By creating a relatively flat organization under the purview of the Iraqi Assistance Group, it could complete two critical tasks. First, “provide [the advisor] with a background of knowledge and techniques that will be useful in the country to which he is assigned; . . . [and] reinforce skills that will enable him to continue his education while on the job.”<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> U.S. Army. FM 3-24: Counterinsurgency, p. 6-15.

<sup>201</sup> JCISFA, “Advisor Basics.”

<sup>202</sup> Hickey, p. 148.



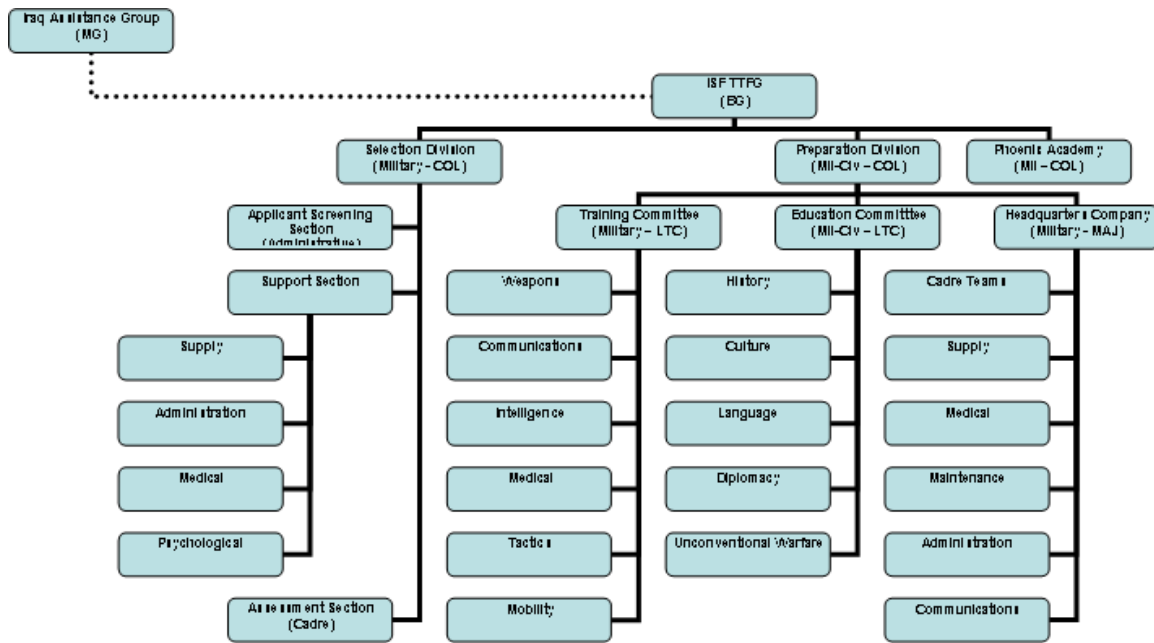


Figure 4. Proposed Organizational Structure for Transition Team Preparation.

Second, such a structure could include a dedicated element responsible for the selection and deselection of personnel prior to their arrival at the preparation phase. This would help save time, effort, and money. Those least likely to meet the organization's standards would be pre-screened.

Lastly, this proposed structure has an integrated preparation component that includes both military training and civilian education. It reflects the need for specialization in that professional educators provide the non-military education component. Military cadre, composed of leaders who have successfully conducted indigenous force advisory missions, maintain the mentorship and leadership of this organization. The remaining military training instructor positions that are not specifically oriented on advisor skills may be filled by Army trainers qualified in the focus subject areas, for example, weapons training, communications, combat lifesaver, etc.

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## VII. CONCLUSION

*The years ahead . . . are crucial ones and good advisors will be needed as much as or more than ever. An informal “selection board” or screening group, at DA [Department of the Army] level, made up of former advisors, which reviewed records and interviewed, even motivated, likely candidates, would be one way of insuring senior level advisor quality as well as indicating highest level interest.*<sup>203</sup>

Given this passage from a debriefing report written by the Commanding General of the Delta Regional Assistance Command (part of the larger Military Assistance Command Vietnam) in the early 1970s, the lost lessons of Vietnam seem particularly haunting in light of the mission in Iraq. The intervening 30-plus years have seen much of the vision expressed here forgotten in the files of history. Even the official “repository of advisory know-how,” the Military Assistance Institute at Fort Bragg, NC, which was the proposed location for such selection boards, can’t be found in internet searches today. The notable present efforts by the U.S. Army at Fort Riley, KS, and further development of advisory units by the U.S. Marine Corps (Special Operations Advisor Group – SOAG [formerly FMTU] and Security Cooperation Education and Training Center – SCBTC) clearly demonstrate that our military is aggressively seeking to regain its past proficiency. As a senior USMC officer has remarked, past experiences “lead to the conclusion that the [advisory effort’s] success in preparing advisors will hinge upon two key components – selection and training.”<sup>204</sup>

Of note too is that “[m]odern weapons in ill-trained hands are actually less effective than primitive weapons.”<sup>205</sup> Having outstanding weapons systems adds minimally to combat power if the personnel using that equipment do not master its application. In essence, military forces that are not well trained are generally ineffective. This is *the* reason it is so critical to employ the best quality transition teams to Iraq. Put

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<sup>203</sup> Cushman, p. 51.

<sup>204</sup> Andrew R. Milburn and Mark C. Lombard. “Marine Foreign Military Advisors: The Road Ahead,” in Ramsey, p. 112.

<sup>205</sup> Robert O’Connell. “Low Intensity Conflict in Europe and the Transcaucasus”. Naval Postgraduate School lecture, Monterey, CA, May 1, 2007.

most simply, as the Iraqi forces become “trained and equipped,” personnel must also be technically and tactically proficient enough to succeed on the battlefield without the omnipresence of U.S. forces. The end state of providing transition teams to the Iraqi Security Forces is to build a competent and confident force, equipped with the tools and training to assume full responsibility for the security of the state of Iraq. Although a clearly difficult task, “properly trained, prepared, and indoctrinated, the advisor can literally be a force multiplier.”<sup>206</sup>

The selection, preparation, and employment of advisors must reflect the same sort of flexibility expected of the advisors themselves. In order to maintain high standards and capabilities, “it [is] particularly important that there be provisions for continuing evaluation and for feeding the lessons of past experience into future planning, selection, and training processes.”<sup>207</sup> If a better method becomes apparent, then institutional change must be implemented based on feedback from all aspects of the advisor program.

Feedback is essential to maintain the flow of fully qualified advisory personnel, whether it is both “positive” or “negative.”<sup>208</sup> In the long run, such information can help “make it possible to compare predicted performance with actual performance,” thereby facilitating decision making for necessary changes.<sup>209</sup>

Positive feedback can be identified in terms of ‘number of candidates who applied and were accepted, compared to the stated goal,’ or ‘the number of teams required compared to the number of teams produced,’ or ‘the average successful completion rate versus the commander’s specified pass rate goal.’

Negative feedback would be best captured through After Action Reviews, internal audits, and client reviews (e.g., from the Iraqi Security Forces, Coalition Forces units, Department of State, etc). As information and assessments from Iraq become available, the cadre and entire preparation apparatus should modify their procedures to meet

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<sup>206</sup> Strader, p. 94.

<sup>207</sup> Hickey, p. 157.

<sup>208</sup> David P. Hanna. Designing Organizations for High Performance. Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, New York, 1988. Chapter 1, “ Understanding How Organizations Function,” pp. 14-16.

<sup>209</sup> Hickey, p. 173.

changing environmental requirements. This method of feedback will be amplified by the inclusion of veteran advisors into the cadre, who will use their first-hand knowledge along with their observations about advisory selection and preparation to correct deviations given what they know is required in the field.

The per capita U.S. Army advisory effort currently seems unprecedented in scope, yet is slowly improving given the experiences of its personnel. However, it still remains tied to aged institutions that tend to favor traditional organizations over new ones. Also, the mindset of many key leaders seems to remain set in the heavily regimented Army of the Cold War era, only grudgingly adapting from a primarily “conventional” mindset to a psyche immersed in unconventional warfare.<sup>210</sup>

It should be clear by now that “properly led and advised Iraqi units [are] more effective than [U.S. forces]” at selected tasks, particularly those that are culturally-based.<sup>211</sup> In order to radically alter the focus of our military forces from conventional to unconventional operations, perhaps the best place to begin is with our learning institutions that prepare men for combat operations. By introducing a radical redesign of the selection and preparation of our advisors, we should be able to more rapidly shift responsibility to Iraqi forces, and subsequently withdraw our own from Iraq.

The mission in Iraq clearly requires outstanding U.S. military personnel to assist the Iraqi Security Forces in the stabilization and future security of their country. This means individuals who can establish rapport and communicate effectively with host nation forces. It is critical that these personnel not only be competent, but thoroughly dedicated to this mission. Furthermore, the provision of such personnel must be among our highest priorities; “to succeed we have got to put into it all interest and skill we possess.”<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> Krepinevich, p. 23.

<sup>211</sup> Ricks, p. 406.

<sup>212</sup> Lawrence, p. 3.

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